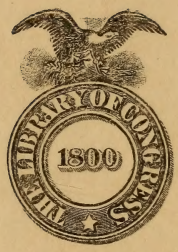

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THE CHRIST OF HISTORY.

THE

CHRIST OF HISTORY:

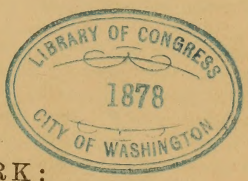
AN ARGUMENT GROUNDED IN THE FACTS OF HIS LIFE ON EARTH.

BY

JOHN YOUNG, LL.D.

EDINBURGH.

"And The Word was made Flesh and dwelt among us (and we beheld His Glory, the Glory as of The Only Begotten of The Father), full of Grace and Truth."—JOHN i. 14.



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TO THE

AMERICAN EDITION.

THE following able analysis of this work is from a review of it in the columns of "The London Morning Advertiser," of June 1, 1855:—

"This work belongs to the highest class of the productions of modern disciplined genius. The author modestly intimates only the simple truth when, in the preface, he states that *the construction*, if not the idea, of his high argument, is new to the world. Its materials are obtained by a wise and severe application of the inductive method of discovering truth, to those general portions of the evangelic narratives, which are readily acknowledged to be undoubtedly historical by the most profound and frank skeptics.

"The author consents, for the sake of argument, to leave out of view all that is miraculous. He gathers together some of the facts, with their teachings, which present to men *the manhood* of Jesus, and endeavors to prove that such a manhood, under the particular outer conditions, can only be possible by the presence and union of *Godhead*.

"We can not, in our very limited space, do more than give a brief, though not unpremeditated, description of the work. We take up the book as seekers after truth, and our author speedily introduces us to 'the outer conditions of the Life of Christ.' Without perplexing us with too minute details, or with innumerable theories, Mr. Young leads us into the immediate presence of great historical facts. We pause in their presence only long enough to see and understand clearly the great realities themselves: and we are hurried onward to the next step in his argument—'The Work of Christ among Men.' This is handled somewhat more fully, as was becoming so high and regal a theme; but even here he will not allow us to delay too long. As illustrations can at best only shadow forth the writer's own conceptions of his subject, the author indulges in but few. The spirit

of respectful modesty will always be that of the worthy guide and philosopher among such high and great sights. Mr. Young is under its influence, and our eye is ever fixed on the primary distinctive features of the separate objects before us. At length we enter upon what every reader must feel to be 'holy ground.' We are invited to behold what our author terms 'The Spiritual Individuality of Christ,' and we fain hope that, among our readers, none will be found unwilling to bow and worship this mysterious, wonderful Personality.

"In all the three parts of the work it is demonstrated that the only philosophy that can satisfy the facts of the case lies in the doctrine of the Incarnation of Divinity. The Incarnation is '*the enlightening fact.*' The argument cumulates in force as we are brought nearer and nearer to this mysterious Being, until it finally becomes so irresistible that we anticipate the inquiring look of our guide, by the confession, that only the doctrine of the Incarnation of Divinity can harmonize the phenomena which history affirms were actually harmonized in the life of Jesus. A joyous smile instantly lights up the countenance of our guide when he adds: 'Grant the fact of the Incarnation of Divinity, and you grant that which demands the miraculous and divine as its necessary and natural companions. In the person and life of Jesus, the miraculous becomes natural and inevitable. The evangelical narratives are justified, and raised above suspicion. The world has a Saviour.'

"We would express our own obligations to Mr. Young for the help given us in perceiving the consistency and unity of the life of Jesus. We heartily recommend this book to all earnest thinkers, for such alone know the worth of a helpful book. Mr. Young has succeeded admirably in condensing his great argument into the small compass of 260 pages—no insignificant achievement in this age of ours. There are many minor matters we wish corrected; but these sink into nothingness by the side of the feeling, of which we are conscious while studying this volume: that this method, by its severe simplicity and directness, excites within us feelings of devotion and adoration. We may describe the book as one of the best works, in modern English, for introducing us to the knowledge and life of Jesus."

PREFACE.

THIS book appeals to those who are prepared to treat, if with severe, yet also with dispassionate criticism, one of the gravest subjects of human inquiry. It is not formally controversial, but it is virtually so, and is offered as a humble contribution in aid of other more elaborate efforts to correct and repel an indiscriminating infidelity.

The argument, in its idea, certainly in its construction, differs materially from those by which the truth it would establish has usually been supported. It is also purposely cumulative, and —if the conception be just and the execution answer at all to the conception—it must increase in force with the successive steps, and will be the weightiest at the close.

A profound mystery is here commended to

the judgment and conscience of honest and thoughtful men, but a mystery which is full of glory and light and life. There is One Wonderful Personality, only One, of all that ever dwelt on this earth, who had more immediate, constant and perfect access to the Infinite Fountain of Being, *than was possible to the constitution of a mere creature.*

LONDON, 27th March, 1855.

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THE

CHRIST OF HISTORY,

ETC.

IN THREE BOOKS.

BOOK I. THE OUTER CONDITIONS OF THE LIFE OF CHRIST.

II. THE WORK OF CHRIST AMONG MEN.

III. THE SPIRITUAL INDIVIDUALITY OF CHRIST.

INTRODUCTION

Usual form of the argument.—Another species of proof.—Earthly life of Jesus not sufficiently investigated.—His humanity alone assumed here.—Inspiration not essential in this argument.—General historical validity of the Gospels assumed.—The life they record not mythical, but real.—"Behold the Man."

A CHANGE in the form of the argument for the proper deity of Jesus Christ seems to be demanded in our day. Accepted and familiar proofs may not have lost their strength, but they have lost their freshness, and they are wanting in adaptation to the peculiar intellectual culture and structure of the present age. Sacred criticism, directed to the historical, prophetical, and devotional books of the Old Testament, and to the Gospels and Epistles of the New Testament, has long submitted its methods and their results to the judgment of the world. Dogmatic theology, also, connecting itself closely with the reigning logic and metaphysics, has long announced its expositions of sacred truth. Arguments on this subject have been accumulated in astonishing number, and have long maintained an acknowledged prescriptive authority. But it is

conceivable that an excess of resources may prove, in certain cases, hardly less fatal than a palpable deficiency. Men are provoked to resist that which, instead of asking favor, commands and compels submission. It is sometimes wise to take not the very highest ground which it is possible to maintain, but the lowest; and if, on this lowest ground, we can succeed in producing an unlooked-for amount of materials, the feeling of surprise conciliates the heart, and assists, instead of obstructing, the mental process which issues in conviction. Perhaps *the earthly life* of Jesus, apart from subtle criticism and from systematic, metaphysical theology, may be found to offer original and extraordinary evidences of His divinity; evidences which, by their number, their harmony, and their force, shall amount to positive proof of this great mystery. This region, owing to the productiveness of others better known, has never been cultivated with the pains which it deserves. But the peculiar kind of proof, nevertheless, which it yields, we presume to think is at once the most intelligible and the most convincing which on such a subject can be offered to reason and conscience.

A temperate and conciliatory spirit is demanded toward those to whom we present the claims of religion; and the exhibition of such a spirit can not injure or endanger Christianity. With perfect safety we may forego, for the time, the inheritance

of evidence and of argument bequeathed from the past, by the researches and the erudition of enlightened men. Demanding nothing more than the *simple humanity* of Jesus of Nazareth, we shall venture from this platform to assert and expound *his true divinity*. Dismissing all preconceptions, however fondly cherished, and however long adopted into the faith of the churches, assuming nothing which is not virtually and even formally admitted by enemies as well as friends we hope to show that *the manhood* of Christ, as it appealed to the senses and the minds of the men of his own times, supplies and sustains the proof of *his godhood*.*

A still larger sacrifice, in the same spirit of conciliation, will be found compatible with safety and honor. The inspiration of the Christian records is not to be demanded here. No collection of writings has passed through a fiercer ordeal than the books of the New Testament. The severity of criticism, it may be safely said, the venomous malignity with which they have been assailed, has no parallel in the history of literature, or of the re-

* The pre-supposition (voraussetzung) with which Neander commences his Life of Christ is certainly fatal to it as an argument, although its value as an exposition of the Gospels, and a critical defense of their authenticity, is in no degree affected by this circumstance. What he calls "the Christian consciousness" (*das Christliche Bewustseyn*) is not innate but acquired, the result of education, and therefore of no authority.—*Das Leben Jesu Christi*, Hamburg, 1855, Einleitung s. 4.

ligions of the world. The facts, the chronology, the references to contemporaneous history, to political and social interests, to science and philosophy, the doctrines and the ethical principles of the New Testament, the honesty, intelligence, and capacity of the writers, and the character of their production as a whole, have been subjected to the scrutiny, often intensely prejudiced, of all nations and of all orders of intellect for eighteen centuries. It is at least grateful to think, that, owing to this very cause, an astonishing amount of power, otherwise unrevealed, has been evoked and effectively put forth in defense of these holy writings. But the inspiration of the New Testament, as that is popularly understood, shall not be insisted on in the present argument; and it shall suffice for us, if this book be allowed to stand only *not lower* than other equally ancient productions. Whatever abatement from its historical validity can be plausibly demanded on account of the remoteness of the period, the character of the age, or the position of the writers, it shall be conceded. For the sake of argument, though only for this, it shall be granted that the Evangelists were not secured against mistake, and that therefore the justice of all their sentiments, and the accuracy of all their details, are not unquestionable. We go farther; let all in these sacred records which belongs to the sphere of the miraculous be ascribed, for the present, to the

habit of the Jewish mind, to the influence of their national history, or to the common tendency to exaggeration. We assume nothing more than this, that the Gospels, in a broad and general sense, are historical and veritable; and this, in point of fact, is virtually granted by all.

By far the ablest of the modern adversaries of the validity of the New Testament, who has subjected it to the most severe analysis, and has brought to his task the largest amount of learning and of philosophic power, has admitted at least a basis, even a broad basis, of historical truth in the Gospels. He concedes that Jesus of Nazareth lived on earth, and that his character, saving the miraculous element so largely blended with the delineation of it, substantially was what it is represented to be by the Evangelists.* This admission indeed can not be withheld, without encountering even graver difficulties than are created by conceding it. The antiquity of the records being granted—and it is granted at this day by all who have seriously investigated the subject, and who, on the ground of scholarship and of intellectual and moral compe-

* "Das Leben Jesu." Even Germany now consents that this attempt to place the Christian Gospels in the same category with heathen mythologies is only an ingenious fallacy, an elaborate defeat. One thing we must be permitted to mark: Strauss begins his criticism by aiming to create a prejudice, at all events a *pre*-judgment. Surely this cannot be too severely reprobated; it is unscientific, it is unphilosophical, it is morally wrong.

tency, are entitled to consideration—one or other of two hypotheses is unavoidable. Either such a man as Jesus of Nazareth really appeared on earth about the time which the Christian records fix, or the writers of the Gospels gave form and life to a mere *idea* which never had an outward realization, and existed no where but in their minds. No third supposition is conceivable on any rational ground; one or other of these two *must* be accepted; and in truth there is no choice between them, for the difficulties involved in the latter are wholly insurmountable. On the supposition that Jesus of Nazareth never actually existed, it is not within the range of rational belief that the *idea* of such a being was formed in that *country*, that *age*, and in the minds of *such men* as the Evangelists are held to have been, and as in point of mental endowment and culture and social rank they certainly were. When it shall have been fully ascertained what that being who is presented to us in the Gospels really was, the evidence will be irresistible that this is not within the range of rational belief, but is so unlikely and unnatural as to be morally impossible. It would contradict all experience and all legitimate induction from experience, and be as utterly out of the course of human things as any miracle ever recorded. It is abundantly demonstrable, and the evidence will accumulate as the present investigation advances, that the Evangel

ists, instead of embodying a conception of their own minds, *must* have witnessed the life which they describe, never *could* have conceived it unless they had first witnessed it, and were able to represent it in the manner they have done, only because it had actually passed under their immediate and frequent observation.

The Gospels, then, contain the history of a life once actually spent on this earth. The writers relate *on the whole* what they saw and heard, and *on the whole* convey the impression which was left on their minds by a real, living being. It is enough. This lowest stand-point is enough. Take only the earthly life of Christ, suppose only that in a broad general sense it is faithfully represented—behold only the *Man—He* shall indicate and demonstrate union with absolute Godhead. Such a *Humanity* as his is utterly inexplicable, except on the ground of true Divinity.

BOOK FIRST.

THE OUTER CONDITIONS OF THE LIFE OF CHRIST.

IN THREE PARTS.

PART I. His social Position.

II. The Shortness of His earthly Course.

III. The Age and Place in which He appeared.

That life on which it is proposed to found an argument for Divinity was singular in the materials and the mode of its formation. The outward and the inward aspects of every earthly course are mysteriously related to each other. The age, the country, the physical organization, education, society, and the like, exert an acknowledged influence in the intellectual and moral development of a human being. Native force of character may rise above the accidents of birth and early position and all the external conditions by which the soul is limited, so that it can never be predicted with certainty, from any given circumstances, what a man's future life shall be, because we can never foresee how the action of these circumstances may be modified, and what minute and delicate influences may either neutralize or assist their effect in the progress of years. But the fact of dependence and of moral causation, nevertheless, has almost the constancy and sovereignty of a universal law.

The seeds of that definite form which each individual life eventually assumes will be found to lie within its early history. The future is never accidental and capricious, a void filled up with materials, gathered according to no principle and disposed without order or law. It is rather the natural product of elements which existed and acted in the earlier period of life. The present and the future stand almost in the relation of cause and effect. Events, influences, incidents in the one largely contribute to make the other what it ultimately becomes. Usually a man's early life and position will be found to contain the germ and to furnish the true interpretation of his future character in history.

PART I.

CHRIST'S SOCIAL POSITION.

His Mother.—Her views respecting Him and their origin.—The influence of these on Him.—Nothing else, in the early life of Jesus, favorable to his subsequent elevation.—His Poverty, hinderances in this to his Ministry.—"The Carpenter."—His want of formal education and of patronage.

It will be proved that the common formative principles which have just been referred to utterly fail to explain the life of Jesus. *His life*, we shall find, stands out a mysterious exception to all the ordinary laws that govern the destiny of men. What *He* ultimately became, so far from harmonizing with his early course and his outward condition, was reached not because but in spite of all the influences descending upon him from both of these regions. It was not a natural result of the circumstances amid which he grew up, but one which, unless to some hidden antagonist force, these circumstances must have rendered absolutely impossible.

We can recognize one specific agency, indeed, though only one, which undeniably had an effect

in preparing Jesus in his early life for the position to which he eventually rose. There was one person, nearer to him and dearer than any other, who must have exerted an influence in the formation of his character favorable to the peculiar development which it was destined to reach. That person was his mother. The Virgin Mary entertained from the first very exalted notions respecting her Son. The origin of these notions can not be unfolded here, because we have consented to surrender for the time all that is supernatural in the New Testament records. The mystery of Christ's birth, the vision of the shepherds of Bethlehem, the visit of the Chaldean sages, the prophetic words of Simeon and Anna in the Temple, must therefore be left out of the discussion. Perhaps it will be found by and by, that facts of this nature beautifully harmonize with the calmest and soundest views which can be taken of the Christian writings. But no use must be made of them here, and they must not be suffered to influence either the narrative or the argumentative part of this investigation.

Twelve years after the birth of Christ, an incident occurred, which is the more remarkable, because it forms the solitary piece of intelligence which is communicated to us respecting a period of his life, extending over nearly thirty years. On the occasion of the Passover, the child Jesus remained behind in Jerusalem after Mary and her

husband Joseph had left to return home, and at the end of three days he was found by them in the Temple, sitting at the feet of the teachers of the Law, listening to them and asking them questions. The circumstance, of Jesus being so long separated from his earthly guardians without their knowledge, is easily accounted for by the usages of the Passover-time. Even his being found with the teachers of the Law is not out of harmony with the history and manners of the period. The Jewish historian relates something of this kind, which happened to himself when he was about fourteen years of age.* All which this incident can reasonably be supposed to convey is granted freely. It is granted also that the words of the child to his mother, when she rebuked him for tarrying behind, "Wist ye not that I must be on my Father's business?" indicated a maturity of mind, a thirst for knowledge, a love of truth, a faith in the being, presence, and favor of God, very extraordinary. It is granted that these words must have sunk into the heart of Mary, must have renewed the impression created by the occurrences of his infancy and childhood, perhaps recalled her first views in their mysterious power, and revived all her early hopes. But after this in-

* Ἔτι δ' ἄρα, παῖς ὢν περὶ τεσσαρεσκαιδέκατον ἔτος, διὰ τὸ φιλογράμματον ὑπὸ πάντων ἐπητούμενος, συνιόντων ἀεὶ τῶν ἀρχιερέων καὶ τῶν τῆς πόλεως πρώτων ὑπὲρ τοῦ παρ' ἐμοῦ περὶ τῶν νομίμων ἀκριβέστερόν τι γνῶναι. Vita Josephi, sec. 2, in Oper. Geneva, 1633.

cident other twelve years passed by, and half that number more, and all the while not a sign of any kind appeared. In the long and dreary interval must not impressions and hopes so utterly unsupported as hers have gradually faded, and at last altogether perished? We can only conjecture what opinions Mary for herself entertained, whether at an earlier or at a later period, respecting the rank and office of the Messiah; but in all probability, they partook of the ignorance, and prejudice, and error of those of the Jews in general in that age. It is willingly conceded that, at the least, she must have believed that her Son was destined by God to a position of great sacredness and dignity, and this faith, no one can doubt, must have influenced her behavior toward him and her method of treating and training him. Certainly she would strive to impart her own views to his mind, and fix within him the idea of his destiny, as she herself understood it.

But *this*, be its value what it may, was the solitary agency in the early life of Jesus helpful to his subsequent elevation; and except this, not a single friendly element can be discovered throughout the history. All else is not only not auxiliary, but thoroughly obstructive. When the whole of the conditions under which the destined development of his character and his life was effected shall have been carefully examined, it will then appear, we

presume, that that character and life were not a natural growth for which his circumstances, according to the ordinary laws of providence and of the human mind, sufficiently account, but, on the contrary, were originated and sustained in spite of circumstances with which no earthly force could have contended, and therefore must have had their real foundation in a force which was preternatural and Divine.

The New Testament makes no secret of the place which Jesus occupied in the social scale. The family from which he sprang belonged to the lower ranks of life; Joseph, the husband of Mary, being a working carpenter. His birth-place, the wanderings of his infancy, his home in such a village as Nazareth, his humble occupation for many years, his dependence afterward on the labor of his disciples and the charity of other friends, are affecting evidences of the poverty of his condition through life. The fact is noticeable in itself, but it is profoundly interesting to those who find in his later manifestations a Being who irresistibly draws toward himself their veneration, their trust, and their hope. *They* believe him to be the Redeemer of the world, and they are astonished that, when on earth, he was ranked with the ignoble and the poor. But the fact, as they dwell upon it, becomes suggestive and quickening; they see that it is fitted to shed marvellous peace into the bosom of

the humblest sons of men, and to reveal a tender and holy bond of sympathy between Jesus of Nazareth and them. *He* endured the humiliations, the burdens, and the straits of poverty, and is he not, therefore, in a touching sense the brother of the sorrowing and the poor? It gives to poverty a singular sacredness and dignity. The principle, not new in itself, acquires new impressiveness that social rank is not the standard of social worth, or of personal excellence and power. The great lesson is pronounced *with unexampled solemnity in the hearing of the world*, that men and things are not always in reality what they are in appearance. It is taught that justice, truth, love, and moral and spiritual worth, must be reverenced in whatsoever associations they are found. The accidents of outward condition do not alter the essential character of good or of evil. Poverty and ignorance, and still more poverty and vice, are not inseparable either in fact, or in the judgment of right-thinking men. They do often co-exist, and there are very obvious causes which at once explain why they should often co-exist. But the connection is not uniform, and it is not inevitable. On the other hand, great wealth is seldom found associated with the highest forms of spiritual excellence. Certainly the love and the high estimation of wealth, rarely separated from the possession of it, are utterly incompatible

with elevation, expansion, and deep spirituality of character.

But the prevailing sentiment of mankind is not to be mistaken. Even if this sentiment were not hostile, it is plain, on other grounds, that a poor man must necessarily, just because he is poor, encounter peculiar and numerous hinderances in forming and executing any purpose, however modest, for the good of his race. His knowledge of the world, for example, his acquaintance with books, and his intercourse with able and cultivated men, must in the generality of cases be exceedingly limited. By the necessity of his condition, he is shut out from much that is quickening and liberalizing, and fitted to impart comprehension, self-reliance, and freedom. But in addition to real hinderances of this nature, he has to struggle against a deep and almost universal prejudice. It is not supposed that any thing great or good *can* originate with persons like him. Such is the evil effect of social distinctions, that it is almost felt that nothing great or good *ought* to originate with persons like him; and that, if it did, this would almost amount to a crime against the usual course of the world. The contrast between his condition and his aims is painfully present even to himself, but still more to others; and the more aspiring these aims are, this contrast operates the more oppressively and injuriously. The instances are rare indeed, in which a

poor and unknown man has risen above neglect and prejudice and the pressure of his condition, and alone has worked out a great idea which his mind had conceived. An unknown amount of obstruction to his work and his triumph was thus involved in the mere fact that Jesus belonged through life to the lower ranks of society.

In addition to the fact of poverty, it must be taken into account that almost the entire of Christ's life was spent in manual labor. Dwelling, till he was thirty years of age, in the house of Joseph the carpenter, we are left to imagine that he, too, was engaged in the same handicraft. But this matter is set at rest by the question of the people, no doubt put contemptuously, which is distinctly mentioned by one of the evangelists, "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary?"* Honest labor, honest hand-labor is dignified and dignifying. The discipline of bodily toil and struggle, wisely regarded, may exert a wholesome influence on the higher nature, may serve noble purposes, and is fitted, under certain conditions, to form vigorous, high-toned, resolute souls. Even the acquisition of superior knowledge and of the power which knowledge creates, though difficult, is not impossible to a working man; and the workshop and the farm have nourished for the world some of its ablest benefactors. At the same time, a life

* Mark vi., 3.

taken up with the labors of the hands is certainly *not favorable* to high mental development. Such a life can not afford the necessary amount of leisure for study and research, and where the energies of the body are continually taxed and strained, it is not possible that at the same time the powers of the mind can be vigorously put forth, and that extensive intellectual acquisitions can be made. Jesus of Nazareth was a common working carpenter till he was thirty years of age.

What direct and formal education he received, can only be conjectured, but the high probability is, that it must have been of a most limited character. Some of his countrymen, when they first heard his discourses, exclaimed, "How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?"* It must have been commonly known *that he had never learned*, that he had received little regular instruction; perhaps none. Even in the absence of this positive evidence, the state of the Jewish nation at the time, the rude condition of the village in which his life was passed, the humble position of his family and his own destination to the trade of a carpenter, would have led us to conclude that he was unlearned and uneducated.

High patronage has sometimes made up for the absence of other advantages. But the poor were the associates of Jesus — his only associates from

* John vii., 15.

first to last—and of men of wealth and influence he knew little. Few thus distinguished, ever deigned to notice him. He received no countenance from the civil government of the country; yet less was he sanctioned by the priesthood of the nation. *They* were his enemies from the first, and were the secret cause of all his sufferings and of his cruel death. With the learned or the rich—with the ecclesiastical or the civil authorities—with the influential classes of society, or even with single individuals of name and weight—he never had the most distant association. Jesus Christ was alone, a poor artisan, uneducated and unpatronized. His entire social circumstances pronounce the impossibility, in human judgment, of his elevation to power and glory.

PART II.

THE SHORTNESS OF HIS EARTHLY COURSE.

Duration of His Ministry.—His Death.—Earthly Causes of it.—Intolerance of the World and His own unconquerable Will.—Shortness of His Life in relation to the Form of His Work—in relation to His Influence on succeeding Ages.

THE disciples of Christianity suggest that, had the Redeemer of the World lived to old age, the impression, at least on their minds, of feebleness, imperfection, and decrepitude must have been deeply injurious. They suggest, besides, that Jesus lived long enough to gain a full experience of the world—a knowledge of the duties, trials, and hazards of life—and long enough for the full probation of his personal character and for the completion of his great work for the world. Whatever force there be in these suggestions, let the simple fact of the case be here briefly stated: Jesus passed away from the earth when he was only thirty-three years of age. Thirty years he spent in Nazareth; for three years he ministered before the world, and then he suffered death by crucifixion.

The early death of Christ is one of those peculiar conditions which, it is believed, give extraordinary significance to his character and to the actual results of his course. This fact, viewed in connection with its consequents, is so strange, that it is imperative to attempt a brief investigation of the causes which led to it. In this discussion, the fact is regarded simply in its historical significance, not at all in its doctrinal and spiritual relations. The nature and design of Christ's death, or its bearing on the redemption of the world, or the high and holy purposes which God might contemplate in it, are not to be considered here. The *human* causes only, which fixed so early a period to the life of Jesus—not those which lay in the Eternal Mind, but only those which sprung up on this earth—come within the scope of the present argument.

Among these causes, the first place must be assigned to the intolerance of the world; the second to that force of will in the soul of Christ, which no amount of intolerance could conquer. With respect to the first, the simple historical fact is, that men could bear Jesus Christ no longer, and were in haste to put him to death. Spiritual truth and its advocates are offensive to the world. The one and the other, indeed, may commend themselves to the human conscience, and be secretly reverenced even where they are publicly disowned. All that is of God shall finally triumph as surely as God lives;

but struggles, prostrations, defeats, *may*, *must*, precede triumph. Truth comes into collision with men's immediate interests—with their sins, exposing and denouncing them—with established opinions and usages—with what is held sacred and what has grown venerable by age—and the conflict can not but be prolonged and fierce. Men can not lightly bear to be detected in their sins—the interested and the privileged can not brook to be dispossessed—and, above all, the principle of unlimited intellectual and religious toleration is about the last which individuals or communities are disposed to adopt. Hence, that which is divinely true and pure must long appeal in vain to the judgments and hearts of men, and long suffer opposition and scorn and evil treatment at their hands; and when, in its contact with any age or nation, it directly strikes at ancient beliefs and at cherished privileges, interests, or vices, we can not wonder that the hatred awakened against it should become envenomed and implacable, should trample on humanity and justice, and should even clamor for the destruction of its apostles. The world, conscious of evil, but proud, impatient, and incensed, can bear no longer, and crucifies the advocate of truth. But there is always a significant resurrection after such a death.

The world demanded that Jesus Christ should die. There was nothing in his spirit, doctrine, or

life to justify the demand. It will be shown hereafter that *he* was no ambitious Aspirant to power and fame, no Enemy to Judæa or to Rome, to the Sanhedrim, the temple, or the God of his country, nor were corrupt and cruel men able to substantiate any such charges against him. But he had incurred the violent hatred of the leaders of all the religious sects in his day. His free and spiritual views, his deep faith and glowing piety, his open sanction of the innocent usages and institutions of society, his appeals, not to tradition or prescription, but to the common sense of mankind, and his use of common incidents and common words, not to name his reproofs, as severe as they were notoriously well deserved, rendered him obnoxious alike to Pharisees, Sadducees, Ascetics, and Mystics. They all disliked his teaching, were provoked by his calm and patient spirit, were jealous of his growing influence, and saw, in his entire life, their own public condemnation. These sects, while contending with one another, united in common hostility to him; and their leaders never rested till at their instigation the people, too ready to obey interested and wicked counsel, demanded his crucifixion.

Jesus heard the cry of the excited multitude, and with awful serenity and force of will he signified his consent. He *would* die if he *must* die, but he would not deny himself. Individuals not of common mold and not dishonest have quailed before

the alternative, Truth or Life. It is a tremendous power within a man which can brave the fiercest assaults of intolerance; a power which must have sent its roots deep into the soul and must have taken hold of the entire spiritual nature. A human will unconquered by frowns, by curses, and by all the terrors of death, is clothed with surpassing grandeur, with the truest moral sublimity. The force of character is immense which, when hostility is gathering and deepening and maddening for its last brutal outburst, preserves a man undaunted, prepared to perish, but determined not to cower.

Jesus of Nazareth *was able* to die, if he *must* die. He was prepared to offer himself up; a precious and noble sacrifice, a nature just expanded before the eye of the world, a life in its freshness, vigor, and promise, and fitted for high service to God and man. In uncomplaining silence, in all the dignity of perfect meekness, in the gentlest spirit of love that the world ever beheld, he laid down his life. His soul, calm, humble, meek, and loving, was immovable as a rock. The intolerance of men met in him a force of will not to be overborne. If he *must* die he *could* die, and he did die at the age of thirty-three.

The fact which remains, apart from the earthly causes which brought it about, is this, that Christ acted directly and publicly on the world only for three years, and that he died in comparative youth.

Usefulness and power are not measured by length of life. Many old men have never truly lived, and there are early deaths which yet can tell of the richest fruits of living long, and point back to deeds of spiritual prowess and to the origination for others of good that will never die. Perhaps it is to the period of youth, as distinguished from maturer age, that the greatest amount of spiritual power, the strongest impulses, the highest activity and energy belong. Grave counsels, wholesome restraints, sagacious suggestions and modifications issue from the experience of age. But youth has *originated* all the great movements of the world, and has most largely contributed to the agency by which they have been rendered effective.

He whom Christians recognize as the Redeemer of the world was only a youth. Whether his religion be regarded as a system of doctrines, or as a body of laws, or as a source of extraordinary influence, it is passing strange that *he* should have died in early life. His brief period of existence afforded no opportunity for maturing any thing. In point of fact, while he lived he *did* very little, in the common sense of *doing*. He originated no series of well-concerted plans, he neither contrived nor put in motion any extended machinery, he entered into no correspondence with parties in his own country and in other regions of the world, in order to spread his influence and obtain co-opera-

tion. Even the few who were his constant companions, and were warmly attached to his person, were not, in his lifetime, imbued with his sentiments, and were not prepared to take up his work in his spirit after he was gone. He constituted no society with its name, design, and laws all definitely fixed and formally established. He had no time to construct and to organize, his life was too short; and almost all that he did was to *speak*. He spoke in familiar conversation with his friends, or at the wayside to passers-by, or to those who chose to consult him, or to large assemblies, as opportunity offered. He left behind him a few spoken truths—not a line or word of writing—and a certain spirit incarnated in his principles, and breathed out from his life, and then he died.

We are not yet entitled, to place the youth of Christ and the other outer conditions of his life, by the side of his public ministry and his personal character. But even here, an amazing contrast rises up, which we must suggest for an instant. In the ordinary course of events, the memory of a mere youth, however distinguished, would soon have utterly perished from among men. But Jesus lives in the world at this moment, and has influenced the world from his death till now. It is no fiction, no mere conjecture, but a fact; an unquestioned, unquestionable fact. There have been multitudes in all the ages since his death, and at

this moment, after nearly two thousand years, there are multitudes to whom *He* is dearer than life. History tells of warriors who reached the summit of their fame in comparative youth; it tells of men of science also, and of scholars, and of statesmen, who in youth rose to great and envied distinction. But the difference is obvious and it is wide, between the conquest of territory and the conquest of minds; between scientific, literary, or political renown, and moral and spiritual influence and excellence. Is there an instance, not of a man acquiring fame in youth and preserving it in old age, but of a man who died in youth, gaining vast influence of a purely spiritual kind, not by force of arms and not by secular aid in any form, but simply and only by his principles and his life—of such a man transmitting that influence through successive generations, and after two thousand years retaining it in all its freshness, and continuing, at that distance of time, to establish himself, and to reign almightily in the minds and hearts of myriads of human beings? If there be, or any thing approaching to it, where is it? There is not such an example in the whole history of the world, except Jesus Christ.

It is time to remember that we are now only laying the foundation, not constructing the edifice. But *this* is the foundation on which it is proposed to rest the argument for the Divinity of Christ.

These, with one short addition to be mentioned immediately, were the outer conditions of the life of Christ, under which his public ministry and his personal character reached their destined development. It is not in that development *alone*, but in that development *under these conditions*, that the evidence will be found of his True Origin and of his personal Pre-eminence.

PART III.

THE AGE AND PLACE IN WHICH HE APPEARED.

Moral condition of the age.—Gentile world.—Judea.—Galilee.—Nazareth.

Mythical theory.—Irreconcilable with the outer conditions of Christ's life.—These, facts not myths.—Not founded on Messianic ideas.

THE circumstances to be introduced here do not need extended notice, but they are too important to be omitted entirely. The age in which Jesus appeared, the nation to which he belonged, and the place where he dwelt while among men, formed an obvious limitation around his earthly life. If there shall be found any thing free, and catholic, and world-wide in the affections and purposes of his soul, it must be remembered that he was born a Jew, one of a people who had been long accustomed to over-value themselves and to under-value all the rest of the world—a people who had become notoriously proud, narrow, and intolerant. He appeared, besides, at a peculiar crisis in the history of that people, and indeed of the world. The testimony of many independent witnesses proves be-

yond question the awful corruption of manners into which the nations of antiquity had then sunk. It is represented that the age betrayed a secret consciousness of its own moral condition, and a secret apprehension that some terrible change was approaching. It would be mere pedantry to quote in proof of this, from Lucian on the one hand and from Juvenal and Persius on the other, passages with which even a moderate scholarship is familiar. And with respect to Judea, the Jewish historian of the times* speaks with unfeigned horror of the moral abominations which then darkened his country as well as the Roman world. But Galilee was disreputable even in Judea, wicked as it was; and even in Galilee, Nazareth was notorious for the ignorance and profligacy of its inhabitants. It is a recorded fact that Christ's connection with this place, merely as a dweller in it, created a prejudice against him, and attached a stigma to his name. The question was put, as if it contained its own answer, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?"† Jesus spent his life, till he was thirty years of age, amid the degradation and pollution of this village, constantly familiar with scenes which were calculated to destroy the seeds of all virtue in his opening soul. It was here, also,

* Joseph. Antiq. Jud. See the detail commencing, Καὶ πρότερον οὗ τῶν Ἰσιακῶν, κ. τ. λ. lib. 18. cap. 3., Geneva, 1663.

† John, i. 46

in the view of those who had known him from his infancy, that he stood forth, at the end of thirty years, to unfold that character, and to assume and execute that mission which are now to form the subject of an extended, and we hope also an impartial investigation.

Thus far our task is accomplished; however briefly and hastily, *the outer conditions of the life of Christ* have been spread before us. But it would be an unpardonable omission, if even here, special attention were not invited to the fact that these are utterly irreconcilable with the vaunted mythical theory. The ablest expositor of this theory, while admitting a certain basis of historical truth in the Christian Gospels, denies altogether their authenticity as histories, and maintains that the Life which they delineate, like the ancient mythologies of Greece and Rome, is fabulous rather than historical. What seem to be facts he pronounces myths, shadowing forth certain spiritual truths, and *these* he labors to show were the very truths most firmly believed by the nation in connection with the expected Messiah. His avowed purpose is to prove that by the aid of their imagination the writers of the Gospels wrought up the scanty materials which they possessed into a series of fables, each containing a spiritual meaning, and that meaning always

in harmony with their traditionary ideas, and even suggested by them.

With the utmost confidence we can defy contradiction when we assert that *these* principles are incapable of being applied to that series of facts which has formed the subject of the short review we have just finished. With whatever plausibility they may be brought to bear upon other parts of the evangelical narrative, it will baffle the most dexterous criticism to adjust them to this portion of it: "The corrupt and debasing influences amid which Jesus grew up in the village of Nazareth"—"The shortness of his earthly course, and its ignominious close"—"His poverty, his humble trade as a carpenter, and his want of education and of worldly patronage"—these are the things which we have put forward as the outer conditions of Christ's life. *These* were not only not in harmony with the Messianic ideas of the Jews at that time, or indeed at any time, but they were diametrically opposed to them. We make bold to maintain that they were the very last things which a Jew would ever have dreamed of connecting with the life of his Messiah. They are not Messianic; the most unscrupulous ingenuity can never construe them into myths, or make them harmonize with national and traditionary fancies. Whatever be fable, these are certainly facts, and would have been eagerly concealed, if they had not been received and undeniable facts

and these facts are all that are now demanded, as the basis on which to found an argument for the true divinity of Christ.

"Jesus was a resident in the village of Nazareth till he was thirty years of age. He died in comparative youth, when he was only thirty-three years old. He was a working carpenter; poor, unknown, untaught, inexperienced, and unbefriended." We shall go to some obscure hamlet of our land, known chiefly for the extreme profligacy of its inhabitants —we shall go to the workshop of a carpenter there, to a young man at the bench, earning his bread by the labor of his hands, remarkable only because amid the surrounding vice, he has preserved himself uncontaminated—we shall go to this youthful artisan, not yet thirty years of age, born of humble parents, brought up in a condition of poverty, associating only with the poor, in no way connected with the rich, the learned, the influential, or receiving assistance, or even countenance, from them—we shall go to this poor young man, who has had no intercourse with cultivated society, no access to books, no time for reading and study, no education but the commonest, and no outward advantages of any kind above others in his humble station, from his birth till that time. Such, in simple historical truth, such *exactly* was Jesus of Nazareth; and these were *the very conditions* under which he developed his future character, and rose to his future position.

BOOK SECOND.

THE WORK OF CHRIST AMONG MEN.

IN FIVE PARTS.

PART I. His own Idea of His public Life.

II. The Commencement of His Ministry.

III. The marked Character of His public Appearances.

IV. His Teaching.

V. The Argument from His Work to His Divinity.

PART I.

HIS OWN IDEA OF HIS PUBLIC LIFE.

His public position, the act of his own will.—His claim to Messiahship.—His idea of Messiahship.—Not temporal but spiritual.—Not national but universal.—Jesus alone in his age, his country, the world

It is a fact that Jesus of Nazareth rose to a position of unrivaled prominence in the eyes of his country. Whether this may appear to have resulted, according to the natural succession of events, from causes which are at once obvious, or whether it shall be found inexplicable on ordinary principles, the fact itself remains; and no naturalistic, rationalistic, or mythic theory, can expunge it from the record.

Perhaps the broad and startling peculiarities of the age in which Jesus appeared, on the one hand, influenced his mind, and on the other hand, prepared his countrymen to recognize his assumed prominence. The great epochs in the history of the world, when it is laboring under some intolerable burden, or heaving with some new and urgent mission just ripe for development, find for them-

selves the men equal to their wants. Unwonted results are always exhibited at such times—powers which had never before revealed their existence are drawn forth, and latent attributes of character start into sudden energy at the bidding of extraordinary emergencies. Individuals, in spite of themselves, are then elevated to celebrity, or the necessities of the times appeal to some mind so resistlessly, that although uninvited, yet secretly conscious of resolution and energy, equal to the crisis, the man feels himself compelled to step forth at once into publicity.

It is certain, that no demand from any quarter was made upon Jesus to attempt the emancipation of his country and his age. The eyes of the nation were not turned to him; and no party in the nation, perhaps not an individual, was prepared to find a Redeemer in him. The transition from private to public life was spontaneous on his part. The first thought, the matured purpose, and the decisive act, were all entirely his own. He *came forth* of his own accord—he *assumed* a public position, and was not compelled, or even invited, or even encouraged, to accept it. This was marvellous. We can not but ask, did it not abash a man in his condition to *become*, and above all, to *make himself*, an object of universal attention? Did not his want of preparation, and his conscious incapacity for a great public enterprise overwhelm him? Did he not

tremble to encounter the caprice of the multitude —the learning, bigotry, and jealousy, of the priesthood, and the tyranny, and cruelty of the civil rulers? He did not, so far as can be discovered. Without fear, but with no ostentation of courage, Jesus *placed himself* on an unusual elevation. His entrance into public life, whatever it might mean, and whatever it might involve, was not a foreign suggestion, but a native impulse—a deliberate purpose of his own; and his own purpose also regulated all his movements throughout. Neither the popular feeling, nor even the wishes of his disciples, nor the current of events, were suffered to govern him, for he repeatedly acted in the face of them all. His own idea from the first was supreme, and his life was a determined realization of that idea, in spite of every opposing force.

The *highest* end of Christ's mission, whether in his mind, or in the evangelic record, is not now the subject of investigation. His entire life, his personal character, and his public labors would require to be spread out; and not only his life, but his death, with all its mysterious meaning; and not only his life and his death, but the subsequent history of himself and his cause would require to be examined, before we could reach even the materials for forming a correct judgment of his mission, in its wide and holy significance. It is enough at present to know, that he claimed to be *The*

Messiah of the Jews. He repeatedly avowed this claim in plain terms; and it is obvious, on the face of the gospels, that from first to last, the conviction in his mind, one of the formative and governing principles of his public life, was this, that he was *The Messiah.*

It is historically certain that at this period the advent of a deliverer was widely expected, and expected with intense enthusiasm. The Gentile world, groaning beneath its burden of darkness and crime, awaited a supernatural redemption; and Judea was tremulous with a hope well defined, and established by the authority of many a sacred text. It was not wonderful that, in a time of universal and high excitement many unfounded claims should be put forward, and especially that among the Jews pretenders should start up, moved by personal ambition or patriotism, or religious enthusiasm. Besides, it must not be overlooked that the appearance of John the Baptist, a genuine claimant of religious distinction, whose success at this period was unbounded, was calculated not to repress, but to deepen the aspirations of other susceptible souls. Perhaps in this way, humble as Jesus was, the latent spark of ambition, patriotism, or piety, was kindled up in his breast, and at last in that obscure village, he came to hope and believe that he was "the elect of God." But a critical and vital question demands solution here, before we can consent

to this interpretation of the origin of his movements. It is this: were the received views of the character and the mission of the Messiah, Christ's views? Had *he* only caught the spirit of his times? Was he only an embodiment of the popular faith? Was he only a creation, naturally springing up out of sentiments and feelings which had long rooted themselves in the heart of the nation? He was not; but he was diametrically the opposite of all this. *His* idea had nothing in common with the views and the spirit which were then universal, but was peculiar to himself and perfectly original.

The Jewish Messiah,* in the belief of the Jewish people, was to be a monarch and a conqueror; his kingdom was to be an earthly kingdom, and his glory, gathered first from the conquest, and then from the sovereignty of the whole world, was to be earthly glory. Such a creed to a youthful heart, must have been powerfully seductive. A throne, a crown, and the empire of a world, might well have kindled ambition in the dullest soul. But Jesus of Nazareth never aspired to sovereignty, or wealth, or earthly glory of any kind. *He* collected no armies and no instruments and resources of war; he invaded no territory and assumed no state such as became a warrior or a prince. The idea that the love of conquest, or of the splendors

* Channing's Sermon on the Character of Christ, Glasgow edition of works, p. 425.

and pomp of royalty, the love of fame or of worldly power, ever had a place in his mind, is utterly destitute of support. It is even in the face of all the evidence. No part of his conduct, none of his proceedings, and none of his sayings, awaken such a suspicion. "My kingdom is not of this world," he declared to Pontius Pilate; "If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered unto the Jews; but now is my kingdom not from hence."[1] If he had it in his heart to be a king, and he certainly had, it was to be a king not of *bodies*, but of *souls;* if he aspired to reign, it was to reign not *over* men, but *in* them, in their judgments, affections, and consciences. "I am come," he said, "a light into the world."[2] "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth."[3] The only weapon of which *he* made use was spiritual truth; he did nothing but teach. His life, his words, all the manifestations of his character, are consistent only with the design to achieve, not a material, but a moral conquest, and to effect not a political, but a spiritual revolution in the world. He had risen to the conception of a purely spiritual reign, the conception of a palace and a throne for God in the soul of man, the conception of the regeneration of man's inward nature, and the free and glad restoration of

[1] John, xviii. 36. [2] Ib. xii. 46. [3] Ib. xviii. 37.

that nature to the unseen, but living and ever-present Father of souls.

We have looked only at one side of the popular faith. Viewed from an opposite side, the originality and individuality of Christ's idea will be still more apparent. The Messiah, in the belief of the Jewish nation, was to be not only a monarch, but emphatically a Jewish monarch; reigning, indeed, over all the kingdoms of the world, but acknowledging a peculiar relation to the ancient people; his throne being in Jerusalem, and his ministers and distinguished servants, Jews. This belief, at a time when they were laboring under a foreign yoke, had become tenfold more dear; every feeling of patriotism was enlisted on its side, in circumstances when, if ever, patriotism is genuine and fervid; not to say that, in this case, patriotism was invested with the sanctity of religion. Last of all, the popular faith harmonized with the deep hereditary contempt of the Jews for the rest of mankind, with their settled persuasion of the distinction which God had made between them and all other nations, and with their long-cherished anticipations of permanent and undisputed pre-eminence. Nothing can be more clear than that, to oppose a belief so deep-seated, to crush hopes so sacred, to disown the distinction between Jews and Gentiles, and to look with equal favor on both, was to invite unmeasured and relentless hatred, and certain dis-

grace and defeat. If Jesus had meant to ingratiate himself with his countrymen, his course would have been to sympathize with their creed and their hopes.[1]

But, independently of any personal or public object which he might have in view, how could he have failed to adopt as his own, the faith of his country in this matter? He had been brought up, like others, in all the common views; he must have heard them often from his mother's lips, from grave and pious men also, and especially in the synagogue of Nazareth on the Sabbath days. There is no reason to think that he can have heard any thing but the common views, from his infancy upward. But he had risen, nevertheless, to a purer and loftier faith, and somehow had formed for himself quite a novel and original idea of the character of the Messiah. "The hour cometh," he said to the woman of Samaria, "when neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, ye shall worship the Father; . . . when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth."[2] Religion to him, and the bonds of religious fellowship, were not national, but spiritual; connected, not with place or people, but with the state of the soul. He believed in something more dear than country, more dear than even the closest of earthly

[1] See Whately's Introductory Lessons on the Christian Evidences.

[2] John iv. 21–23.

relationships. "Whosoever shall do the will of my Father who is in heaven, the same is my brother and sister and mother."[1] "They shall come from the east and from the west, and from the north and from the south, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven."[2] God's kingdom and his own mission, as he understood it, embraced the world, and was designed, not to confer peculiar distinctions on a single nation, but to originate and diffuse blessings to which all nations alike should be welcome. *His* idea was catholic, as it was purely spiritual. Born and educated a Jew, associating only with Jews, never beyond the limits of Judea in his life, whence had he derived this idea, whence caught this spirit? how gained this expan sion and nobility of soul, how reached this large, and lofty, and Godlike faith?

That poor young man whose external history we have looked upon, was alone in his country, in his age, in the world. His great soul rose above religious prejudices and errors, and above all national, educational, and social influences. He stood forth not a Jew, but a man to fulfill a high and purely spiritual mission; embracing not Judea only, but the world; not a nation only, but universal

[1] Matthew xii. 50.

[2] Matthew viii. 11. and Luke xiii. 29.—See Channing's Sermon as above.

humanity. And was *he*, then, essentially, nothing more than he seemed to be? Was all this possible, in the circumstances, to a mere man? Above all, was it possible to such a man as we have found Jesus outwardly was?

PART II.

THE COMMENCEMENT OF HIS MINISTRY.

He dealt with the Age and Country *collectively*.—Their Character. —Christ, the Incarnate Conscience of both.—He not conscious of Personal Guilt.—Began by rebuking, in order to reform, the Nation.

THE marked difference between the views which are now held of the office of teaching, and those which were prevalent in the ancient world, must not be overlooked. Very extended freedom of investigation and communication was enjoyed in heathen nations by all classes, without distinction. The priesthood were not considered to possess higher rights and powers in this respect than others, and any individual, without violating any law or any established usage, might found a school and promulgate his faith or his skepticism. No restrictive policy, at least as to persons, was sanctioned even in Judea, and even the office of *religious* teaching was not reserved for the clerical or any other privileged order. There were rabbis, the heads of schools for sacred learning, and there were also scribes and lawyers whose business it was to

write out copies of the sacred text and to expound its meaning; but *they* were not necessarily priests nor of the Levitical tribe. There was nothing in the laws or customs of Judea, to hinder any individual from assuming the office of religious teacher. It may therefore have excited little surprise, when Jesus began to teach, that he was no priest or rabbi, or scribe or lawyer. But it must have struck the men of that generation that he was young, and poor, and unlearned; all the outer conditions of his life were such as to make it wonderful that *he* should aspire to any public office, and to insure that, if he hazarded the attempt, his presumption would be punished with certain and signal failure.

But the voice of Christ was lifted up, and the world heard, as, indeed, the world hears to this day. In some of the villages of Galilee, he first began to speak, to individuals or to small or large assemblages of persons, as the circumstances might be. He journeyed throughout Galilee, then throughout the other parts of Judea, and was frequently in Jerusalem preaching and teaching. It is the *first tones* of his voice which we now seek to catch, *the commencement* of his ministry which we now seek to observe and interpret. He began to deal with facts rather than with doctrines—with this fact especially, that one great era in the world's history was then closing, and another of higher

meaning and of brighter promise was then opening upon men. He began by characterizing the masses rather than individuals; by depicting the country and the age collectively, and in their broad and prominent qualities. He foretold the speedy doom of things as they then were, and declared that evil, wide-spread and deep-seated, could no longer be endured; and that a radical spiritual revolution was at hand—a kingdom of God in place of a reign of hypocrisy and formalism. And he taught at the same time that the duty of the age was expressed in one word, repentance; not in the restricted meaning to which custom has reconciled us, but in the sense of an entire and universal *change of mind.* "Repent," he cried as he commenced his public course; "*change your minds*, for the reign of heaven is at hand."[1] He thus made it known through the length and breadth of the land, that in his judgment, at least, nothing would avail but a thorough and entire reformation of principles and of manners. It must have been at once evident that Jesus was no panderer to the prejudices and vices of the times in which he lived, or of any favored class of individuals. He pointed with a faithful hand to the opinions, the habits, the morality, the religion, the worship, the entire spirit of the age, and pronounced that the condition of things was utterly corrupt and must be revolution-

[1] Matt. iv. 17.

ized. The voice of his opening ministry to all classes in the nation was this, "Repent; change your minds, for the reign of heaven is at hand."

It does not rest on his statements only, but on ample historical evidence, that that particular period bore the character of deep hypocrisy and ungodliness. Rigid observance of religious ceremonies was combined with ignorance of religion itself and with an utter destitution of its spirit. Gross wickedness was hidden beneath the forms and the name of sanctity. Spiritual worship, the veneration and love of a God of righteousness, purity, truth, and all moral excellence, was almost unknown. There was a magnificent temple, an established worship, an ordained priesthood, a vast and gorgeous ritual, and sacrifices, and offerings, and feasts and fasts. There were also synagogues open every day and recognized forms of prayer which were repeated, not only in private, but in the market-places, and at the corners of the streets. It was even sought to invest the food, the dress, the looks, the postures of the body with the sacredness of religion; and if such things as these had constituted piety, that age must have been pre-eminently pious. But Jesus declared that true worship is perfectly separable from these things, and is not essentially connected with any of them, though it may consist along with them all. God looks to the soul alone, to its genuine and uncon-

strained actings, its reverence, trust, and love. Worship in God's sight is wholly spiritual—always, altogether, only within the soul.

Human virtue was as little understood in that age, as Divine worship. A selfish spirit had consumed the heart of all true goodness, not only as between man and his God, but as between man and man. Morality had become an organized hypocrisy, truth and inward excellence empty names, and ritual observances, which contained no homage of the understanding or of the heart, were the vail thrown over unrighteous and impure lives. Jesus proclaimed the sacredness, dignity, and beauty of moral excellence, and that, without this, there could be no greatness and no worth. He conveyed to the ears of his countrymen, some things altogether new, and others he announced with greater clearness and with new authority. The greatness of humility and the dignity of love as taught by him, were new, and they were too palpably unwelcome, as well as new, to Gentiles and Jews. The pride, ambition, and covetousness of the human heart, the doctrine of retaliation, and the warlike spirit of the times, were utterly opposed to this teaching. Jesus blessed and honored the poor in spirit. He taught that virtue consisted in the patient endurance and the sincere forgiveness of wrongs, and in kindness to the wrong-doer; consisted not in revenge, but in love, in genuine good-will—good-will even to

enemies. It was then believed—it is still very widely believed—that high self-estimation is essential to dignity of character. Jesus put his hand on the head of a little child, and said, "Whosoever shall humble himself as this little child, the same is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."[1] Lowliness is greatness, genuine goodness is greatness, child-like obedience to God is greatness. True dignity is a lowly and guileless state of soul. Humbleness of mind, together with rectitude, purity, truth, love of God and good-will to man, these are the elements of moral grandeur and of the highest spiritual dignity.

Whether or not the ministry of Christ realized at the last what it promised at the commencement, it certainly began with a faithful revelation to that age of its own moral condition. The truest benefactor of any age, is he who exposes and expresses it to itself. Self-knowledge is wealth and well-being, the basis of moral reformation and of moral progress, whether to the individual or to the multitude. In this case, conscience, stronger than the pride and the blindness of the soul, brings up from the depths within an image which the man or the multitude fails not to recognize; and the look of which, though it alarms, corrects and heals. He who shall touch and quicken another's conscience, who shall present truth to it, and rouse it to fidel-

[1] Matthew xviii. 4.

ity, performs an invaluable, but also a difficult and a hazardous service. And the difficulty and the hazard are incalculably augmented when we pass from an individual to a nation; for the blindness, the pride, and the perversity of will in this case are beyond measure more inacessible and invincible. The age, like the man, flatters itself, becomes reconciled by habit to any evil—so reconciled, that at length evil is invested with a kind of sacredness. False shame makes it reluctant to confess and to yield: it is eager to find out excellences, and as eager not to see or to forget faults, until there is at last no eye, no ear, no soul to distinguish that which is wrong. A conscience is needed for the age, as for the individual—a power that shall reveal it to itself, and arouse and convict it. Jesus acted in the outset of his career to the men of his generation—not in promise only, but in fact—the part of the truest friend, and traced out before them in broad and faithful lines their moral likeness, in order that they might recognize themselves. The age in its express lineaments at that time, in its ignorance, formalism, pride, hypocrisy, and impurity, he held up to itself. For the time, he was an incarnate conscience to the nation, performing that office which each man owed to himself, but would not discharge; and crying to all in a voice fitted to pierce to the depths of their spiritual nature, "Re-

pent; change your minds, for the reign of heaven is at hand."

Boldness and honesty are not always associated with becoming modesty, and a keen perception of what is wrong in others, is very separable from a quick sensibility to the faults of one's own character. Had this Jesus, we are entitled to ask, no share in the guilt of his country? Admitting that his powers were extraordinary—that he was, as he seemed to be, able to descend below events and manifestations, down to their hidden causes, and to bring up these causes discovered and interpreted—admitting that in his recorded statements no want of comprehensiveness of observation, sobriety of judgment, or impartiality of spirit, can be detected, are we to forget, that he himself belonged to the country, to the age which he so unqualifiedly condemned; and have we not a right to ask whether he, therefore, was not necessarily involved in their guilt? It will be shown hereafter, and it is scarcely denied by any intelligent and candid rejector of the higher claims of Christianity, that the personal character of Jesus was unimpeachable; at all events was in point of fact unimpeached. Proclaiming the sins of others, *he*, so far as the evidence goes, was above suspicion, above charge; and in all his utterances, there is nothing to indicate a sense either of personal guilt or personal danger. It often appears, in what he says and does, that the spiritual condition

of others affected his soul with genuine compassion for them, and with deep solicitude for the great cause of God and man; but there is no token either of fear or of shame, on his own account. He seems rather to stand apart, and only to look dow upon the facts of a condition in which he had no personal share.

The question imperatively demands an answer—Who was this, whose mode of looking on human affairs and whose feelings were so original, so superior, and who professed to be gifted with such uncommon insight into the moral state of the world, and with such fore-knowledge, withal, of its coming destinies? What right had *he*, to pronounce on the spiritual condition and the pressing duty of his country? It is said, in reply to these questions, that the convictions of his conscience were imperative? There is indeed no higher authority than conscience, and no higher virtue than to bow implicitly to that authority. But how did it happen that Christ's conscience alone was thus clamorous, and that he alone was compelled to speak out? A man distinguished in the church or the state, venerable by years of sainted character, and of large and ripened experience, may be allowed to do what would be presumptuous in any other. But this was no gifted, experienced, or distinguished character; no statesman, priest, or venerable sage; but to all mortal seeming, an inexperienced, uneducated

mechanic. The fact is simply this, an obscure youth took it upon himself to be the teacher, reprover, reformer, of his country and his age. Was this possible, in the circumstances, to a mere man—above all, was it possible to such a man as we have found Jesus outwardly was?

PART III.

THE MARKED CHARACTER OF HIS PUBLIC APPEARANCES.

I. Severity.—Moral Condition of Palestine.—Scenes of His early Ministry.—Scribes and Pharisees.—Formalism and Hypocrisy. —II. Tenderness.—Instances and Source.—III. Simplicity.—General Character of His Life.—Relation of His Teaching to Times, Places, Persons.—His Words and Illustrations.—IV. Authority.—Testimony of Hearers.—Claim to Connection with God.

THE individuality of Jesus strongly impressed itself on his whole public life. It gave a unique form, as has just been shown, to the *beginning* of his ministry, and the same impress, but drawn with deeper lines, was left on his entire subsequent course. One of the most marked features of Christ's spirit and manner in public was

I. *The terrible severity* with which, although seldom, he exposed and denounced evil. Friendless and powerless as he seemed to be—as in his earthly relations he certainly was—he did not repress on necessary occasions a burning indignation; and if a voice of thunder was required to awaken and alarm that generation, such a voice was lifted up and re-

sounded through the length and breadth of the land. Supposing the aim of Jesus to have been, as we shall hereafter prove that it was, to plant a spiritual system among men—the mightiest obstruction then existing to such a system was the condition of Judea. The minds of the Jews were so proud, so blinded, and so hardened by sin, that until they were thoroughly aroused and convicted, there could be no opening for the entrance of new light and life. It was not of choice, but from necessity, that the preaching of Jesus took that form which was yet an exception to its pervading tone, and that with stern severity he rebuked the age in which he appeared. "This is an evil generation"—"an evil and adulterous generation"—"a sinful generation"—"a wicked generation"—"a perverse generation"—"that the blood of all the prophets which has been shed from the foundation of the world may be required of this generation."[1]

Upon the scenes of his earlier ministrations, he poured forth his indignant, yet pathetic warnings—"Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which have been done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and in ashes. But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art

[1] Matthew, Mark, and Luke, *passim*.

exalted unto heaven, shall be brought down to hell."[1]

But the objects of deepest aversion and abhorrence to Jesus were the Pharisees, Lawyers, and Scribes, the leaders of the chief sect in that day, the transcribers and interpreters of the Bible. He was strikingly more patient with the Sadducees, the latitudinarians and freethinkers of Judea, although he decisively condemned their principles. Even to the convicted and gross violator of the laws of morality, he spoke with wondrous gentleness. But his severity was consuming, when he turned to the high religious professors—the men of stern orthodoxy and of saintly rigor—the admired but unworthy champions of Judaism. Hypocrisy, pretense, hollow semblance, were of old, and they are still, unutterably abhorrent to Christ; and nothing was, or now is, so dear to him as simplicity and sincerity. If there be still, as there were of old, men "who tithe mint and anise and cummin, but neglect the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith," in whom, however fair their exterior, are found not the living principles of religion, but only dead dogmas and submission to outward forms, Christianity disowns them as Christ disowned these. The kingdom of God on earth which he announced and founded, is the reign of living principles in the soul, not the

[1] Matthew, xi. 21, 22, 23.

adoption with the lips, or even by the judgment, of a system of dogmas, however true, and not outward homage to any set of rites, however significant. The Being with whom we have to do is a spirit; and his worship is a spiritual and real service. Nothing but truth, pure truth, a living reality in the soul, will answer to the principles and the spirit of the Christian books. Simple reality is every thing in this religion—pretense is infamy and crime.

Against hypocrisy, formalism, pretense, Jesus lifted up his voice in the severest tones. "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy." "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites." "Ye shut the kingdom of heaven against men, and neither go in yourselves nor suffer them that are entering to go in." "Ye love greetings in the market-places, and the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues." "Ye bind heavy burdens on men's shoulders, but ye yourselves will not touch them with one of your fingers." "Ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers." "Ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, he is tenfold more the child of hell than before." "Ye cleanse the outside, but within ye are full of extortion and excess." "Ye strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel." "Ye blind guides." "Oh, fools, and blind." "Whited sepulchers, out-

wardly ye appear righteous, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity." "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how shall ye escape the damnation of hell?"[1] How withering, how blasting, must such words have been from such lips! But imagine a young man outwardly conditioned as Jesus had always hitherto been and at this very moment actually was, equal to such thinking and such daring, and still more imagine him tolerated even for an instant in uttering such words—and all the while to be no other and no more than he seemed to be! It is impossible.

But severity in Christ was exceptional and occasional, as it was terrible. It was awakened only toward certain aspects of the age, and only toward certain classes of character. Another and quite opposite attribute pervaded and distinguished his official life—the attribute of

II. *Tenderness.* The great lights of the world, brilliant but cold, have not often reflected much of this gentle virtue. Philosophers and sages have deemed susceptibility of heart unbecoming their character and vocation. A gifted and God-sent man, it is thought, must be superior to all the tenderer and softer impulses of ordinary human nature; and it is found in fact, that when men imagine they are appointed to act in God's name, they at once assume a sort of holy isolation and crucify the

[1] Matthew, xxiii. 13–33.

common feelings and sympathies which bind them to their fellow-creatures. They speak *down* to humanity, instead of standing on its level and mingling in its sorrows and its joys.

The life of Jesus Christ is full of incidents, that reveal surpassing tenderness of heart. As he journeyed to Jerusalem, when he drew near to the city, he wept over it, and said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her chickens under her wings, but ye would not!" "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this, thy day, the things that belong to thy peace; but now they are hid from thine eyes!"[1] At the last, this city was distinguished by a singular act of his grace; and when he commanded his disciples to "preach repentance and remission of sins among all nations," he added, "*beginning at Jerusalem.*"[2] Of the same character was the merciful notice of that disciple, who, in the hour of trial, had disowned and deserted him. The first words which Jesus spoke when he again met this fallen man were admonitory but gracious: "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?"[3] Among the multitudes who followed him to Calvary, were certain women, to whom he turned and said, "Daughters

[1] Luke, xiii. 34, and xix. 42. [2] Luke, xxiv, 47.
[3] John, xxi. 15.

of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but for yourselves and for your children."[1] Bethany recalls the image of a friendship, as genial and as touching, as ever grew on this earth. Jesus loved Martha, and Mary, and Lazarus. Lazarus fell sick and died. Jesus came to the house of mourning, and amid the desolation and anguish of the loving hearts there, he "groaned in spirit, and was troubled;" he followed the sisters to the grave, and, when he saw them weeping, and their friends also weeping, "Jesus wept."[2] Once, as he sat at table in a Pharisee's house, a woman, who was a sinner, prostrated herself in his presence, and bathed his feet with her tears, and wiped them with her hair. She was spurned by the Pharisee; but Jesus said, "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven her; for she hath loved much."[3] Once, when he happened to be in the temple, the Pharisees brought to him a woman convicted of a mortal crime. He addressed an indirect rebuke *to them*, which compelled them to retire with shame; and then, turning to the guilty woman, he said, "Where are those thine accusers? Doth no man condemn thee? Neither do I condemn thee; go, and sin no more."[4] Singularly gracious, forgiving, and loving was that voice which once was heard in the temple and the streets of Jerusalem, and which woke up the

[1] Luke, xxiii. 28.
[2] John, xi. 35.
[3] Luke, vii. 47.
[4] John, viii. 11.

echoes on the shore of the Lake of Galilee. It has long since died away, but not the living force of love which inspired it. That yet lingers in the ancient words which survive to this day.

III. *Simplicity* very strikingly marked the public appearances of Christ. He was perfectly unaffected and inartificial. It will be difficult to find in the Gospels, even a seeming indication of disingenuousness on his part. No latent wish was in his heart to conceal any circumstance connected with his origin, his past history, or his present position, from the fear that it might be unfavorable to his reputation and success. There was nothing in him like maneuvering, desire to create impression, gain influence and produce effect. If men who are really great, or who would be thought great, contract eccentric habits, adopt a peculiar mode of living, select some wild and strange abode, affect a singular dress, or manner, or look, or tone of voice, we shall search in vain for such extravagances in him. He affected no singularity, he assumed no consequence; his dress, his mode of living, and his speech continued to be to the last those of the common people. He appeared before his countrymen simply as he was and had always been, not at all solicitous to adapt either his history or his modes to his altered position.

Christ had no particular building, like the Jewish doctors, or the heathen philosophers, where he

delivered his instructions—no lyceum, grove, portico, or hall; and he had no fixed days and hours, for unfolding the different branches of his system. The ancient sages were accustomed to distinguish their public from their private prelections. Some things they uttered freely to all who applied to them; but there were others which they reserved for the initiated—doctrines peculiarly profound, or peculiarly sacred, and which required a long preparatory course before they could be appreciated and adopted. Perhaps this was a legitimate method of awakening interest and securing power; perhaps it was even necessary; certainly its effect was to create a vast amount of influence, and to maintain in the public mind a high idea of the resources and the wisdom of these sages. Jesus spoke the same things to his disciples and to the people generally—to the few and the many. Whatever the character of his instructions might be, they were indifferently addressed to any sort of persons, any where, at any time. The most striking thoughts might be disclosed to a single individual—a member of the sanhedrim, or a poor woman of Samaria,—or to many thousands in one assembly, or in a private house as he sat at table, or when he was walking, or when he was sitting wearied by Jacob's well, or on a mountain, or in the plain, or on the shore of a lake, or from a fishing-boat, or in a synagogue, or in one of the cloisters of the temple; but always,

simply as the occasion offered, without contrivance, without maneuver, or underhand motive.

Christ composed no formal discourses, delivered no carefully constructed orations, but always spoke perfectly natural, making use of the commonest objects and incidents for illustration, just because they were near, and easily understood, and free to all. The lily, the corn-seed, the grain of mustard, the birds of the air, the falling of a tower, the rain, the appearances of the sky, these, and the like, gave occasion for the utterance of high and imperishable ideas. And the language in which these ideas were uttered was the language of the common people. No severe philosophical style did he adopt, no scientific formulæ, did he introduce, no new terminology did he create, no rigid dialectic method did he pursue, no high and hard abstractions, and no close and elaborate argumentation did he affect. He conveyed his instructions in the most unpretending and informal manner, and in the commonest and simplest words. He owed literally nothing to phraseology, to modes, to circumstances. Whatever influence he acquired, and whatever power he exerted, it was owing to simple reality; in no degree to management, pretense, tact, or show. He did nothing—nor even seemed to wish—to suggest an idea for which there was not an actual basis, or to make the idea seem any other than the actual basis sustained. In his manner, his words, and his

acts, he was simply real, not more, not less, no other than he showed himself to be, so far, that is to say, as respected his earthly relations, for with them only we have to do here. He was pure, unaffected, inartificial reality—his disciples maintain, the only perfectly simple reality that ever alighted on this earth.

Simplicity is true greatness, it is moral nobility, and reveals a nature too pure and too genuine to endure deception or pretense. But was this likely to have been the taste, or if the taste, the attainment, of one in the circumstances of Jesus of Nazareth, had he been no more and no other than his external life disclosed?

Blending with the attribute of simplicity there was a mysterious

IV. *Authority*, which marked the public appearances of Christ. Those who listened to him often testified that "his word was with power."[1] "The people were astonished at his teaching, for he taught as one *that had authority*, and not as the scribes."[2] They questioned one another, saying, "Whence hath this man this wisdom?"[3] On one occasion, certain officers sent by the Pharisees to apprehend him were arrested by his voice as he taught, were unable to execute the order, and returned, saying, "Never man spake like this man."

[1] Luke, iv. 32.
[2] Matthew, vii. 29.
[3] Matthew, xiii. 54.
[4] John, vii. 46.

Whether it was an air of majesty about his whole appearance, or his calm and earnest voice, or the depth and force of what he said, there was left on the minds of all who listened to him an impression of power more than human, which they found it impossible to resist. Perhaps the origin of this impression, at least in part, admits of some farther explanation. In addition to any singularity in his ideas, or in his mode of conveying them, there were certain forms of expression which he was in the habit of using, and which were most startling and mysterious. This young man, from a remote and disreputable village, who had spent his life in manual labor, and had only lately appeared in public, not only claimed to possess an intimate acquaintance with spiritual truth, but he spoke in a way in which even the prophets of Israel had never dared to speak. His frequent style of address to his countrymen was this: "Verily, verily, *I* say unto you," "Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time. . . . . but *I* say unto you."[1] "Whatsoever ye shall ask in *my* name, that will *I* do unto you."[2] "*I* appoint unto you a kingdom."[3] "Come unto *me*, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and *I* will give you rest. Take *my* yoke upon you, and learn of *me*, and ye shall find rest to your souls."[4] We offer no interpretation of

[1] Matthew, v. 41
[2] John, xiv. 13.
[3] Luke, xxii. 29
[4] Matthew, xi. 28, 28.

these expressions at present, and we found no argument on what may be conceived to be their natural import. It is enough that they were uttered, and that they must have contributed to that impression which we have seen was felt so strongly by all who listened to Christ. With, or without such passages, it is certain that an extraordinary authority and power accompanied his words; and unless we add this element, we shall fail to reach a true conception of what his appearances in public actually were.

Aided, then, by the general views at which we have now arrived, let us thoughtfully follow Jesus in his wanderings through Galilee and Judæa, and look upon him in the village and the city, on the mountain side and the lake, surrounded by a small and select company, or by a vast mixed multitude. Recalling all the facts of his early history and his outward condition up to the moment when he entered on his public course, our interest, almost anxiety, can not but be profound. What is there—we try to satisfy ourselves as we ask—what is there about his general spirit and manner as a public man, to distinguish him from others? Without regarding at present either the subjects which he selects, or his method of treating them, we ask, what is the general impression left on the mind of his qualities as a teacher? Are there manifest signs of his origin and previous condition, marks

of servility and timidity, traces even of coarseness and vulgarity, evident proofs of inexperience and youth? There are not. On the contrary, while Jesus always speaks with transparent honesty, we find among the qualities which especially marked him, now a terrible severity, and again, more frequently, a surpassing tenderness, as if his soul was a deep fountain of compassion for man; now an unaffected simplicity, in appearance, in language, and in manner, and again, a power more than human, irresistible by those that listened to him.

And was this verily a young man just taken from the carpenter's workshop, uneducated, inexperienced, and friendless? It was. But if so, was he only *this* and no more?

A more decisive reply to this question, and from a higher region of thought than we have yet ascended, may perhaps be found. Christ's teaching itself may convert into certainty the conjecture which even his marked qualities as a teacher suggest. The words that fell from him, the spiritual doctrines which he revealed, may throw fresh light on his origin, and irresistibly lift our faith above the mere outward history which belonged to him. The inquiry, at all events, is worth whatever pains can be bestowed upon it, and it must be conducted with candor and with patience.

PART IV.

HIS TEACHING.

CHAPTER I.

PRELIMINARY GENERAL VIEWS.

THE medium through which the teaching of Christ is presented to the world, is very singular in its character. His disciples can not appeal to any work from the hands of their Master, constructed for the purpose of giving a full and systematic exposition of his doctrines. Nor did the Master, in default of such a work from his own hand, select for this high task one of the most gifted of those who were attached to his person, and prepare him, by a special course of instruction for accomplishing the task with success. The Arabian prophet committed, to writings dictated by himself, those views which he wished should be connected with his name. The writings of Epictetus, Seneca, and the later Stoics, yet extant, contain a full exhibition of the ethical and divine philosophy of that remarkable school. Socrates has found histo-

rians and expositors of his peculiar teaching in two of the most accomplished and able of his disciples, Plato and Xenophon. Even the Chinese patriarch, Confucius, who lived long prior to the captivity of the Jews in Babylon, left in his own writings—if the opinion of competent scholars may be relied on—an authentic account of the principles and laws which he sought to establish among his countrymen. But there is no book by Christ himself, or by any of his disciples, devoted to a formal and extended exposition of his personal teaching. Our knowledge of this must be gathered from a a few set discourses and a few parables, from private conversations, and from incidental remarks, which discourses, and parables, and conversations, and remarks are scattered, manifestly without any rigid regard to order, over the narrative of a life, itself full of intense interest. This narrative, again, is presented in four different parts, by four different hands, at different periods. Each of these parts, as might be expected, contains much which is also found in the others; and if all the repetitions were expunged, the entire record of Christ's life would be reduced to a few pages. Within this small compass, and forming only a little part of it, lie the whole of the materials which make up the only account which has come down to us of the substance of Christ's personal teaching.

It is not to be expected, under all these disad-

vantages, that a ministry extending over no more than three years, can have sent down to the world a legacy of spiritual truth at all to be compared with what the world has received from other quarters. Such an expectation is the very last which could enter the mind of one who should look into the Gospels for the first time, without prepossession and without previous information. What can a mere youth, a poor, uneducated, inexperienced and friendless Gallilean mechanic, have said to the world which deserved the world's attention? Let us hear! if with caution, also with impartiality.

It must be distinctly understood in the outset that whatever spiritual truths are taught in the Gospels, their authorship shall here be attributed without scruple to Jesus of Nazareth. It was intimated at the earlier stage of this investigation that there was incomparably greater difficulty in supposing that the Christ of the Gospels was an ideal creation, existing nowhere but in the minds of such men as the Evangelists, than in supposing that they had only represented a real living being, and were able to represent him in the manner they have done, because they had actually seen him. The argument is the same in kind, which we now apply to a particular department in the life of Christ. It is every way more natural and less difficult to conceive that such men as the Evangelists were, merely record what they had actually heard

from the lips of Jesus, than to imagine that the ideas which they express were the growth of their own minds. It may be assumed, as beyond any reasonable doubt, that the fountain of all the spiritual truths contained in the Gospels was the mind of Jesus Christ.

What, then, are the spiritual truths which are clearly and undeniably taught in the Gospels? Without attaching importance to every word and every occasional expression, without straining and forcing the language, and contending for all which it might be possible to prove lies in it, we seek now to give prominence only to so much as, it can not be doubted by any dispassionate reader, it contains.

We enter on this investigation with a feeling of deep solemnity and with conscious singleness of purpose, seeking not to exaggerate in any thing, but rather to understate the results of impartial inquiry, and desirous that whatever is here asserted, respecting the substance of Christ's teaching, should be severely tested by an appeal to the Gospels themselves.

It could serve no good purpose to notice all the subjects of secondary importance on which the mind of Christ may have been incidentally expressed. His views of civil society, of the relative duties of rulers and subjects, of poverty and wealth, and of the two conditions of human beings repre-

sented by these opposite names; his counsels, marked by deep sagacity and unbending principle, uttered in many various circumstances, addressed to his disciples, to single individuals, or to classes of persons; his inculcation of duties religious, civil, social, personal; his faithful warnings to the unthinking, the insincere, the vicious; his words of sympathy and consolation to the afflicted and desponding—all these may be passed by without injury to our argument. Leaving them, therefore, we shall attempt to produce, as faithfully and succinctly as we can,

A SUMMARY OF CHRIST'S TEACHING.

One who for the first time should intelligently examine the Christian Gospels, could not fail to be struck with the idea manifestly underlying their whole extent, and often lifted up into singular prominence, of a Universal Spiritual Reign, by the name of "the kingdom (or reign) of God"—"the kingdom (or reign) of heaven." Such a man would certainly reach the conviction that Jesus taught in a very unpretending, but at the same time a very intelligible manner; that the human race, without distinction of Gentile and Jew, were destined to the highest spiritual elevation, of which their nature and their condition on earth admitted. The noticeable fact is, that the youthful Galilean carpen-

ter was *alone* in *this* teaching, and that no other mind before had risen to such views of the destiny of man on earth. Eighteen hundred years ago this divine thought first became a living word among men, and it has never perished since, and the world at this day is only laboring to work out the old idea of the Gospels. Conflicting theories of human progress—of the emancipation of man's intellect and heart—of his deliverance from ignorance, error, vice, and suffering—and of the advancement of knowledge and freedom, and individual and social happiness—find their root here. The first conception is due to the mind of Jesus Christ, and in his teaching, the conception is presented, not vaguely and confusedly, but with luminous precision. It is the reign of God *in* men, when the Father of minds shall be known, loved, and revered by his children. It is the reign of righteousness, purity, truth, love, and peace, the universal reception and dominion among men of all true, just, holy, generous and divine principles. It is the highest stage of religious, moral, intellectual, social, and individual cultivation. It is the noblest development possible on this earth of all the attributes and capabilities of humanity. It is spiritual victory after the battle of thousands of ages. It is the triumph of good and of God over moral and physical evil! The idea originated with Christ, was matured in his mind, and was freely imparted in his teaching. His soul, during its so-

journ below, bestowed this imperishable thought and kindled this inextinguishable hope. *He* first cast this immortal germ, "the seed of the kingdom," into the bosom of the earth: what produce it shall yield, the world is yet waiting to behold.

The doctrine of an universal spiritual reign opens to us another with which it stands closely connected. It is this, that the great battle of the world and of all time is with *sin;* not with suffering so much, as with that which is the cause of all suffering—with moral evil, the root and source of physical evil. The Christian Gospels are distinguished by the frequent and vivid representation of sin as a deep and deadly evil in the heart, as voluntary departure from rectitude, from purity, from truth, from love—in one word, from God, separation from Him in thought, affection, and will. Particular crimes—falsehood, impurity, revenge, avarice, ambition, and the like—are sometimes singled out for special reprehension; but, more frequently, the parent source of crime in all its forms is declared and exposed. The greatness of the evil stands out with appalling distinctness; its debasing and polluting nature also, and its plague-like power of self-propagation and perpetuation. In the teaching of Christ, sin is an undoubted and awful reality, the bitter cause of all that afflicts and crushes the world, the death of the human body, the perdition of the human soul.

The forgiveness of sin is as real in the Gospels, as its existence and its atrocity. The doctrine appears in a more expanded form in the Apostolic Letters; and *there* its nature, its basis, and its limitations are stated with greater variety of language, and its different aspects are set forth by a multitude of figures borrowed from the ancient Jewish worship. But its importance and truth are clearly taught in the words of Christ. The nature of God, the perfections of his Being, and his relation to his earthly creatures, are so exhibited as to render forgiveness sure, and clear as sunlight. He who is true, and just, and holy, is also ineffably gracious: the burdened soul, crying for emancipation from evil, and trusting in God, has perfect assurance of pardon. The foundations of this fact yet wanted a flood of light which the Cross was to pour down upon them, and it was to be made yet more manifest how necessary and how glorious a thing God deemed it to be to forgive sin, and how intensely, how infinitely interested he was in this issue. But the certainty of forgiveness from God—unlimited and free forgiveness—was lifted up on high, one of the divinest lights in the public life of Jesus.

Pardon of sin—not as a doctrine merely, or even as an object of hope, but as an experience, a fact realized in the soul—supposes the reunion of man with God, and is the living germ of all spiritual excellence. The first necessity of man is the recog-

nition of the highest of all his relations, his relation to God, the parent virtue is faith—faith in the being of God, in his character, and his government.

There arises the doctrine of Providence, connecting every moment of our earthly life, and every event with the Supreme Power, and with an invisible world. It is seen that there are vast spiritual laws which overspread and enwrap the universe; *sin is death, holiness is salvation.* These laws are in harmony with the will of God, but they are eternal and immutable in themselves; not arbitrary appointments, not originated by God, but founded in the unchangeable nature of things. These laws are what they are, *by necessity*, and never were, and never can be other than they are. Amid the sway of these eternal laws, guiding their administration and reigning supremely over all, is the great God. Spiritual providence is his government of the world, by these laws, and in the exercise of all his infinite attributes. It is universal, minute, unslumbering: it is wise, it is holy, it is merciful: it is for, not against, the good; always for the good, putting down evil, protecting, nourishing, helping every thing that is good; bringing forth the largest amount of good with the smallest admixture of evil. It is terrible only to evil, it invites to reliance and hope.

The doctrine of Prayer harmonizes with that of Providence. It rests on the fact of our dependence

on God, on the belief of our intimate connection with the invisible world, and on the deep longing for spiritual communion which springs from the conviction, that God is to us the most real and the most near of all beings. Prayer is not an instrument for altering the purposes or moving the heart of God, or for procuring the suspension of the ordinary course of nature; but it is one of the natural modes in which piety utters itself—in which it wants, for its own sake, to utter itself. It is a part of worship, one of the proper forthgoings of the created to the uncreated mind. True worship is within the soul. Whatever be its separate acts and its outward manifestations, its essence and its place are wholly spiritual. It is knowledge, veneration, trust, love.

Piety toward God is the basis of all moral excellence; and it is a noble pile of virtues which is erected on this basis, in the teaching of Jesus. Common and acknowledged excellences—integrity, truthfulness, purity, temperance, justice—find their due place here; but, in addition to these, there are elements either altogether or almost unknown elsewhere—humility, meekness, forgiveness, self-denial, love to enemies. It is not only taught here that we should love others as we love ourselves, and do to them as we would have them do to us, but it is inculcated that the reigning principle in the soul must be a universal and genuine

good-will, a deep desire to produce happiness, to put down evil, and to do only good to every living being. Our enjoyments, possessions, and immediate interests—every thing except our piety and virtue—must yield to this spirit of love. No evil conduct in any being, no personal wrongs we may have suffered at his hands, must be allowed to extinguish the desire to bless even him. We are commanded to requite evil with good, and to love our enemies. Virtue is the burning and deep desire, cherished, in spite of every thing, to do only good; it is sacrifice and service for others. The life of Christ, his disciples assert—with what truth we may be better able hereafter to judge—was a perfect realization of his teaching, an extended act of sacrifice and service, the living image on earth of the invisible God. The Divine nature is love; eternal, infinite desire to spread blessedness. Jesus proclaims that human virtue in its foundation and its essence is represented by one word—love; love to God and to man; not a mere emotion, effeminate and enervating, a sign and a cause of weakness, but an enlightened, masculine, resolute and supreme regard to the rights of God, and to the true interests of our fellow beings. He proclaims that this is the end of rational existence, the dignity, strength, and joy of the rational nature. This end reached, man is Godlike, a partaker of Divine nature, recreated in the image of his Father.

Genuine, glowing, profound regard to God and to man is described as a Divine life in the human soul, an undying spark from the eternal fire, which, once enkindled, is never extinguished. The origin of the Divine life—its supports, conflicts, and varying manifestations—are all set forth with simplicity and power. Spiritual truth is shown to be the aliment of the spiritual nature, "living bread," of which if a man eat he shall hunger no more; "living water," of which if a man drink he shall thirst no more. Spiritual truth, understood, chosen, adopted into the soul, is the priceless good; it is blessedness, freedom, power, and wealth; it is pure, exalted, imperishable treasure.

It can not be overlooked, that we have here, in a new form, the idea which at first we found to be the most prominent in the Gospel—the idea of a reign of God in the soul of man. The working out of this idea, in one or other of its forms, occupied the entire personal ministry of Christ. He lived for this, and for this he died, not to promulgate only, or to predict, but actually to found, a reign of righteousness, purity, truth, love, and peace, a spiritual kingdom of God among men.

The rapid and condensed view of the teaching of Christ which has been presented, may be sufficient to help us to form a general conception of its character, but much more extended and particular acquaintance with it is required for the purpose

which we contemplate here. It is necessary to enter largely into detail, and to examine separately and fully at least the leading subjects of Christ's public ministrations. With this view, we now turn to the three great doctrines which are announced in the Gospels;—the doctrine of the Soul, the doctrine of God, and the doctrine of the Reconciliation of the Soul and God.

CHAPTER II.

OF THE SOUL.

§ I.—THE SOUL'S REALITY AND GREATNESS.

On the very threshold of this subject we are arrested by the humiliating necessity of confessing ignorance. That which formed one of the high themes of Christ's teaching—the soul—is absolutely unknown, so far as respects its distinctive essence and nature. At the same time the ignorance thus confessed is not peculiar to this region of thought, for that which we call matter, and which is immediately and constantly before our senses, is as little understood as that which lies beyond the reach of sense, and which we call soul or spirit. Is there then any real distinction between the two? is there in the nature of man an actual element answering to the word spiritual, something distinct from and higher than the material organization? This is the question which has burdened and troubled the ages; and up to this day the only reply to it which at all satisfies the reason, and furnishes ground for an enlightened faith, is that which finds in the soul

itself its own proper evidence. The spirituality of man we hold to be a primitive truth, an original intuition, which the same mighty hand that formed our nature at the first, planted within it and made an integral part of it. Whether the appeal be made by each individual to his own consciousness, or whether he take the wider range of his personal observation, or whether he search into the history of nations, whether he limit investigation to his own times, or extend it back into the past ages, we hold that the conclusion we have named is the only one which finally commends itself, as legitimate and consistent. One thing is certain, that the *reasonings* of the past ages, apart from *intuition*, have not conducted men to a clear, uniform, and decisive result. The region has proved too profound and too dark for feeble and limited beings to explore, and the human intellect has returned from the search after evidence, bewildered and oppressed. At the same time, justice demands the confession that the intuitional proof is by no means in all respects unexceptionable. It is often extremely difficult to reach the true voice of human nature as it is constituted by God, and to read the native, spontaneous verdict of the soul in reference to itself. There are most painful discrepancies and confusions, and the testimony admits of being woefully corrupted and even altogether suppressed.

The fact is not to be denied, that the nations and

the ages have not agreed, and do not now perfectly agree, in one energetic response to the question of the soul's reality, as distinct from the material organization. On the one hand, we can not shut our eyes to reckless skepticism in some, and to sensualism and moral debasement in many more; and on the other hand, there are tokens without number of laborious yet fruitless speculations of deep and unsatisfied longings, of dark conjectures and of torturing fears. The light kindled by God in the soul has had to struggle for its preservation and its purity. The voice of man's nature has always come up amid the clamor of other and hostile sounds. That voice has not been listened to; sometimes it has been so long unheeded, that at length it has ceased to make itself heard at all. Even where it has been distinctly recognized, men have shrunk back from the difficulties and the mysteries to which it seemed to conduct. The idea of a spirit inhabiting the body is hard to be understood; the origin of the spirit, the nature of its connection with the body, its laws and its destinies —all are mysterious and abstruse. It is much more *easy* to believe that man is what the senses teach concerning him, and no more; it is even more *agreeable*, on some accounts, to believe only this, and it becomes even more agreeable as the mental and especially the moral condition deteriorates. Faith in any thing beyond the senses becomes more and

more unwelcome and unlikely, and at last is morally impossible

Without consulting the history of remote ages and of distant lands, our own times will supply evidence sufficiently extended on this subject, and our own country will furnish instances the counterpart of which, we need not doubt, can be found in all other regions of the earth. Among ourselves, there are human beings that scarcely know that they have a soul. A faint echo of the divine voice may still linger in these sunken natures, and it may never be absolutely impossible to awaken them and to make them catch the dying sound, but virtually they live on as if that voice had never been uttered, and as if no echo of it lingered within them. These beings, from their birth upward, have put forth no powers but those of their bodies, and have conversed only with the objects of sense. The external world alone—the labors, interests, attractions, duties, and wants which belong to it—has successfully appealed to them. There has been every thing to deaden the sense of a higher nature, little to awaken and stimulate it. The struggle to provide for daily necessities, and still more the indulgence of low sensual appetites and confirmed habits of vice, have rendered every thing connected with a spiritual world uncongenial and alarming. In this way, multitudes among us are scarcely ever disturbed by the

thought, that they have *a soul.* They think only of the body and of the outward world, and are utter strangers to their rational and responsible nature and to their solemn destiny. They have lost all sense of the dignity, the duties, the power, and the worth which belongs to them. For human beings in this condition, the very first necessity is to know themselves, and the very highest boon which it is possible to bestow on them is a knowledge of themselves.

Jesus came to the world with this boon in his hand, at a time when the soul was awfully unknown. An age of marvelous intellectual activity, of high cultivation, and of abundant produce, of its kind, scarcely believed in the soul. A few of the more privileged and gifted minds, a few wise and earnest men, longed for inward light, and they found it in measure; but to the world generally the soul was almost unknown. Even in Judea, gross materialism had darkened and enervated religion. It seemed to be imagined that the service of God needed no intellect, no conscience, no heart, no spiritual nature, but only eyes, hands, lips, features of the countenance, movements of the body. To Jews and Gentiles, the soul in its real greatness, in its noble attributes, in its vast capacities, and in its high destinies, was practically unknown. There was needed, if not a revealer of what was new, a

restorer of what had long been all but lost, a quickener of what lay dead and buried.

Who shall stand forth to tell to man that he has a soul? Who shall redeem the birthright so vilely cast away, and lift up in the sight of all nations the forgotten, forsaken, dishonored mind? Who shall read aloud the handwriting of God on the nature of man, restore the text once so fairly inscribed, clear it from all false glosses, all various readings, all mistakes and blots? Who shall give back to the world the Divine original, after the interpolations and corruptions of a thousand ages? Jesus of Nazareth has done nothing less than this. In his teaching may be found the reality (and not less the greatness, the accountability, and the endless life) of the soul, revealed with a luminousness and a fullness, for which we look in vain elsewhere.

There is no formal exposition in the recorded sayings of Christ of the doctrine of the soul, its origin, its nature, its union with the body, its powers, its laws, and its fate. None of these form the subject of elaborate argumentation, or of brilliant discussion. There is no array of evidences on the one hand, and no enumeration and refutation of errors on the other hand. Nothing like proof is ever attempted. Jesus spoke to men, as if he knew that they *did not need* proof, and that they already had *within them* the highest proof, of which the subject admitted. He spoke of the soul,

as of a truth already ascertained and indisputable, which, however, men had wickedly excluded from their minds. He spoke like one whose office was to announce that of which they ought not to have been ignorant, and to remind them of that which they never ought to have forgotten. His method was direct appeal to the nature of man—clear solemn appeal, in a matter of which he left themselves to be the judges. His ministry was a proclamation of all places, circumstances, and connections, of the doctrine of the soul. Underneath all his teachings this doctrine lies; closely interwoven with them, directly suggested by them, often conspicuously standing out from them. He would have the world know and believe that there is a spiritual nature in man, an invisible, precious part of his being, and that the forgotten soul is a profound, a universal reality. All times, all nations, all conditions, rich and poor, bond and free, alike are distinguished in this respect; it is the birthright of all, the common inheritance of man. The reality of the soul was involved in His doctrine of a reign of God; in that of sin and that of pardon: in that of religion, since its place and its essence alike are spiritual; in that of prayer and that of worship; in that of piety toward God, and in that of human virtue. His entire teaching rests on the basis of man's spiritual nature, and without this would be utterly unmeaning. His ministry was a voice to

the world, on behalf of the soul, familiarizing the lost idea, and pleading for its restoration.

The mechanism of the body is curious and mysterious, the earth around and the skies above are full of wonders, the present life has its interests, attractions, and noble uses; but there is that within man to which, not in the frame of the body, nor in the structure of the visible creation, nor in the machinery of the present life, any resemblance can be found. Christ's voice proclaimed the soul; and amid the degradation, the profound torpor, and the guilty self-abandonment of the world, the sound was renewed and prolonged, The soul! the soul! And that whose *being* was thus heralded, was in itself truly great. Its origin exalts it marvelously. The offspring of God, and bearing on it the image of the Father, the soul is great. Its attributes, incomparably higher than any which reside in matter, make it great. Its vast capacities, also, and, most of all, its immortal destiny, make it great. In the Gospels, the soul is often contrasted with earthly things, and lifted up above them all. The words of Jesus are framed to convey to the bosom of a man a solemn assurance, and to create a deep conviction of his unutterable worth. As a matter of fact, they have done this in the most unpromising circumstances, and have effected what all other agency fails to effect. The ignorant, the uncultivated, and the vicious, have been taught by them

to reverence themselves, and to recognize the sacredness of their own being. In the teaching of Christ, the soul *is* the man, and determines his position in the scale of existence; not the body, not outward possessions, not social rank, not any thing visible, not any thing connected only with the present world; but the spiritual nature, its powers, principles, and moral condition. The soul *is* the man; in it are all his *real* distinctions, all his worth, his dignity, and his happiness; there lies his character in the universe, there his *whole being* for good or for evil—there and nowhere else. The Gospels do not assist us in defining and comprehending the essence of spirit, or in solving the hard questions of metaphysics respecting the connection between matter and mind, how the latter acts upon and through the former, and is in turn constantly affected by it. But they have filled the world with a most blessed sound; *there is a soul in man, and the soul is, beyond expression, great and precious.*

§ II.—THE SOUL'S ACCOUNTABILITY AND IMMORTALITY.

Accountability belongs only to the rational and moral nature, and it belongs to this, of necessity. A river flows on in its course; but whether rapidly or slowly, in a wide or narrow stream, and with clear or troubled waters, it flows unconscious-

ly and without meriting either praise or blame. The tree strikes its roots and spreads its branches; but we attribute to it no virtue; and when it withers and perishes, we charge it with no crime. The animal frame is sound and healthy, or it is attacked by disease, or is struck down by sudden accident, or seems to sink of itself; but no judgment is passed upon it, as if it deserved either commendation or condemnation. The irrational creature walks, flies, creeps, or swims; it seeks its food in the herb of the field, or it preys upon some other form of life in order to sustain its own; but neither good nor evil is asserted of it on these accounts. The river, the tree, the bodily frame, do not act, but are acted upon. Consciousness, intelligence, volition, are wanting to them. They are only what they are made, and as they are affected by circumstances, over which they can exert no control. Even the living creature, though a voluntary agent in certain respects, is under the irresistible law of instinct, and has no sense of God and of right and wrong to govern its choice.

The spiritual nature of man belongs to quite another order of existence. It is not passive merely, but active; and its activity is not instinctive merely, but intelligent and voluntary. Here is Reason, here Conscience, here Will, the royal power in the soul, the presiding judge in the inward tribunal, who hears what the understanding,

the affections, the inclinations, and appetites, and, above all, the conscience, have to say, and thereafter chooses and resolves. Here is the soul's power of self-determination. It is not compelled, not placed under irresistible laws like those of instinct; it is constituted to choose and refuse for itself. The entire doctrine of responsibility is involved in this fact. If the acts of the soul were at any time involuntary, or compulsory, and not the effect of its determination and free choice, it would be thus far blameless and meritless; but they can not be so. What the soul is, and does, it chooses to be, and do; and it is, therefore, and to this extent, responsible. The waters of the river, the leaves and fruit of the tree, the condition of the human body, and the movements of the irrational creature, have in them neither moral goodness nor moral evil; but the thoughts, affections, tastes, principles, purposes, and choices of the soul originate with itself, spring out of its will, and render it the proper object of commendation, or of reprehension.

Oftener, perhaps, than under any other aspect, Jesus represents the human soul as exposed to that Eye which unerringly perceives all its evil and its good, and he teaches that therefore there is unutterable solemnity in every act of the spiritual nature, and that what a man thinks, feels, resolves, or does, is the gravest of all questions. The lesson

is forever true; we need to feel that we can never for a moment escape the immutable law, "Sin is death; holiness is salvation." The God of the spiritual universe is forever looking upon us, and his sentence is pronounced for us, or against us. The doctrine of the last judgment is one of the many forms of the doctrine of responsibility. The parable of the ten virgins, of the laborers in the vineyard, of the steward, of the talents, of the husbandmen, of the wheat and the tares, of the barren fig-tree, are so many varied representations of this overwhelming truth. The scrutiny of God is likened to the process of fanning and sifting wheat, or to that of dissolving and testing metals. The perfect rectitude of the Judge, and his perfect knowledge of the innumerable peculiarities of each case are declared. The universality and the minuteness of the reckoning which will be taken, are foreshown. Every secret thought, it is affirmed, and every idle word will be brought into judgment. This spiritual nature of man makes even his short residence on earth awfully solemn, and invests every moment with everlasting interest. Self-inspection, watchfulness, and prayer, become the first duty of beings constituted as we are, endowed with conscience, reason, and will—beings, besides, who are destined to an existence, of which the present earthly life is only the commencement and the promise.

It is often assumed that immateriality involves immortality. It *does* involve indivisibility—the immaterial is the indivisible; but whether indivisibility and immortality are synonymous may admit of some doubt. Matter is made up of parts; it is capable from its nature of being decompounded and dissolved. But are we quite sure that decomposition and dissolution are destruction—are we not rather sure that they are not? Does not all the evidence on this subject which we possess sustain the conclusion that matter is not destroyed—that, though its parts are separated and its form changed, it is not destroyed, not annihilated? If, then, we can not argue destructibility from divisibility in the case of matter, it is palpably fallacious to rest the proof of indestructibility in the case of mind, on indivisibility, that is immateriality. The soul *is* imperishable, but the certainty of this must not be grounded on the fact that it is immaterial and indivisible. The self-action and self-government of mind exalt it immeasurably above unconscious matter, and above all animal instincts and faculties. Its intellectual, and especially its moral powers, its unlimited capacities, and its lofty aspirations, create a strong presumption that it is formed for a higher destiny than they. But a strong presumption is not positive proof.

The absolute certainty of the soul's eternal existence is distinctly affirmed by Christ; but the ground

of this certainty is shown to be not so much its immaterial nature as its moral condition. In Christ's teaching, holiness and holy being are immortal; godliness is immortal; rectitude, purity, truth, love, are immortal; and the soul in which these virtues dwell is an heir of eternal life: but that which has surrendered itself to ignorance, impurity, and enmity to good and to God, is an heir of eternal perdition. Even on this earth, incipient spiritual perdition may be awfully evident. There are instances even here of what may literally be called the soul's death, the death of intellect, heart, and conscience; appalling examples of the effect of moral evil in darkening, enfeebling, imbruting the inward nature, so that it seems bereft of all its rational and moral powers. And it must not be forgotten that on earth there exist causes to draw forth the energies of the guilty soul, which can not operate hereafter. All good beings and all good shall hereafter be forever separated from evil beings. Evil shall hereafter be alone, and alone shall develop its own rank and deadly nature, and exhibit its unmitigated effects. If this be true, and if evil beings shall be left absolutely alone in the midst only of evil, it is not hard to imagine that, in the progress of ages, they *must become* a terrible wreck, unutterably worse than any thing which earth has ever witnessed, and shall furnish a tremendous and everlasting vindication of the language "lost souls,"

"perished minds," "fires quenched," "lights gone out forever in the blackness of darkness."

Jesus Christ teaches that sin *is* perdition; not that at some future day it shall produce death, but that it *is* death. From first to last, throughout all its course, at every moment, moral evil is only death. Unless it be extirpated, the soul can only die; it may exist in the sense of simply *being*, but it is really dying rather than living; and forever, its existence is a death, a process of perdition, whose final issue lies behind an impenetrable vail. But life is the destiny of that nature which has been emancipated from moral evil. There is a holier and mightier vitality than that of the animal frame, or even than the physical life of the mind; that is, its power to think, feel, and resolve. There is a life of life to man. God is the spring of pure being. Separated from him by ignorance or false views, by conscious guilt, distrust, and enmity, the soul carries in it the seeds of death, and in order to live, it must be restored to God, and God must be restored to it, to its knowledge, confidence, and love. It is *this life of God in man* which Christ's gospel teaches is eternal; which not only shall never be extinguished, but is essentially and necessarily immortal. On earth, in heaven, any where, every where, throughout the universe, this is *the eternal* life; the only eternal life known to Christianity—union or reunion of the created

mind with God. It is this which shall survive uninjured the separation of soul and body. That separation shall not harm the nobler being, but the spiritual faculties shall be improved instead of being enfeebled by the crisis through which they have passed; and the life of life within, unscathed, untouched, shall find itself in a new and genial sphere, with eternity for its irreversible inheritance. The soul's endless being is intelligence, rectitude, purity, love, and all goodness.

This is brought to light by the Gospel, but *nowhere else.* "The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ, our Lord."[1] God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believed on him should not perish, but have everlasting life."[2] "God's commandment is life everlasting."[3] "To whom shall we go," said the disciples to Jesus, "thou hast the words of eternal life?"[4] "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God," etc.[5] "He that receiveth my words hath everlasting life."[6] The words of Christ are likened to a "well of water springing up to everlasting life."[7] "Thy brother shall rise again," Jesus said to Martha, when her brother Lazarus lay in the tomb. She replied, "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection, at the last day. Jesus answered, He that believeth on

[1] Romans, vi. 23. [2] John, iii. 16. [3] Ib. xii. 50.
[4] Ib. vi. 68. [5] Ib. xvii. 3. [6] Ib. v. 24. [7] Ib. iv. 14.

me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and he that liveth and believeth on me shall never die."[1] Thus impressively and majestically did Christ announce the Divine life in the soul of man, a life unhurt by the death of the body, and of immortal duration. If the miracle of the raising of Lazarus be counted for nothing, at least on some occasion of bereavement, words of this import, words of unexampled simplicity, dignity, and strength fell from Christ's lips. Beside the graves of men, and at their festive boards, on all occasions Christ proclaimed the Soul! It is real! it is great! it is accountable! it is immortal! The body shall die. The earth and these heavens shall pass away; but the Soul endures forever, in Life or in Perdition!

[1] John, xi. 25.

CHAPTER III.

OF GOD.

§ I.—THE SPIRITUALITY, UNITY, AND MORAL PERFECTION OF GOD.

THE age in which Christ appeared, fearfully dark as it was, was yet not content to abide in darkness. Even then there were burdened hearts that did earnestly seek after God, and a piercing cry was lifted up from the depths of paganism for the true light of Heaven. Jesus came to respond to that cry, to quiet the troubled bosom of man, and to bring to his knowledge the only object of worship and of love. To reveal God, is a still higher office than to make known the soul. The doctrine of God is the foundation of all religion. Every system of religion *must* have a god, and the character of the religion corresponds necessarily with the character of the god—is, indeed, wholly determined by this, and will be material or spiritual, feeble or powerful, pure or corrupt, degrading or elevating, cruel or benignant, just as the Being for whom it claims the veneration of men recedes from absolute excellence, or approaches it.

It formed no part of the work of Jesus to *demonstrate* the being of God to the world. The "a priori" and "a posteriori" proofs on this subject, as well as the historical proof grounded in the alleged consent of all past ages and of all nations, find no place in the Gospels. No trace of the argument from the work to the worker, from the contrivance to the contriver, from the marks of intelligence and design in the visible universe to an all-designing mind, is discoverable here. The old hypothesis of the eternity of the universe is not combated, nor that of the everlasting concourse of atoms in immensity, and their fortuitous combinations, producing all the manifold results which we now witness in the creation around us. The existence of a Supreme Eternal Cause is *assumed* in the New Testament, as a first principle; and, as in the case of the soul, a direct and fearless appeal is made here, also, to the intuitions and to the consciousness of the human mind. It is in these, at last, that we reach the most satisfactory ground of faith in the being of God; and it may be fairly questioned whether, apart from these, the "a priori" and "a posteriori" arguments have ever by themselves overcome the settled unbelief of a single human being. There seems to be a primitive faith on this subject, which can only be traced to the same origin with the mind itself. It is congenial and native to the soul to believe in God. Men may work

themselves into an opposite belief; they may at last resign themselves to Atheism, either in consequence of the extreme difficulty and darkness of the subject, or owing to moral causes; but *none* begin with this. The first faith is invariably theistic not atheistic. With interminable and wide differences in other respects, there is a marvelous concurrence of sentiment up to a certain point, among all nations and ages. That there is *Divinity* somewhere in this great universe, that there is some object of worship and of obedience, is an original belief, dating from the constitution of the soul itself.

In passing from the Being to the Nature of God, we are compelled to reason from ourselves; for from ourselves alone, from our own higher nature, a pathway is found up to the Highest Nature of all. The common argument from effect to cause is unanswerable, so far as it goes; the material universe proves the being of a God, for the simple reason that every effect must have a cause. But the *material* universe does not and can not prove the *spiritual nature* of its cause. The only proof, the only hint, of this is given in our own spirituality, *and nowhere else.* The New Testament affirms the existence of angels, a race of pure spirits, intermediate between man and God. The fact rests entirely on the authority of revelation, but it seems to involve no peculiar difficulty. The idea of un-

embodied spirits is quite as conceivable as that of spirits embodied, and perhaps there are even some difficulties in the latter mode of being which do not apply to the former. The fact also appears to be quite in harmony with the analogies of the creation. Among material things and beings there are gradations without number, all very beautiful, and suggestive of the opulence and power of the Creator. It is not hard to believe that in the same way, and with the same effect, important gradations may exist among spiritual creatures also. The New Testament affirms that man does not constitute the solitary order of this form of existence, but is allied to an elder brotherhood of angels; the elder and the younger alike tracing their descent immediately from the great "Father of spirits." But whether with or without the aid of this intermediate step, it is from our own souls that we ascend to the conception of the Infinite Soul—from the spiritual nature within us, to the spiritual nature above us, and over all.

The spirituality of God suggests two leading ideas, Life and Intelligence. God is *a Life*. The word brings us to the verge of an impenetrable mystery, before which we stand in helpless wonder. The first step in the ascent from unorganized matter perplexes and confounds us. We may be able to watch the vegetative process in its successive stages, and to distinguish the phenomena which mark each

stage. The seed and the soil in which it is planted we may be able to subject to analysis, and thus to ascertain the peculiar properties of both; and the action also of the sun and the rain may be well understood. Science shall explain the entire course of vegetation; but if we ask what that vital principle is in which vegetation originates, science to this day leaves the question unanswered. Next above vegetable life is animal life—a deeper and darker secret still. The distance is immeasurable between unconscious matter, organized or unorganized, and even the lowest form of animal existence. Here is not merely organization, not merely unconscious changes, but self-motion, voluntary, conscious motion, and capacity of enjoyment and suffering, an awful and inscrutable power of willing, feeling, and doing. It has never been penetrated; perhaps it is impenetrable by mortals. Science can not explain it, can not assist us to imagine it.

Next above animal life is intellectual, by which even the lower animals are distinguished in different degrees, indicating, as they often do very plainly, that they too have their thoughts, their affections, their calculations, their reasonings, and their plans. Here is life within life, mystery within mystery; but it is in man that both are revealed in their true greatness. Reason in man surpasses immeasurably the highest forms of intelligence as it exists in the inferior tribes, and at all events at this

limit *their* progress terminates. There is a mystery more awful still of which man alone on this earth is the sanctuary. They have no moral nature, no conscience, no sense of God, of right and wrong, of immortality, of responsibility, of judgment to come. But man is thus endowed and exalted. Here, therefore, is life yet higher still, mystery still more profound. From vegetable, animal, intellectual moral, human, angelic life—from created life in all its wondrous modes—we ascend to him who is called "The Life." It is a noble image of the Divine nature. We think of God before the creation of the universe, alone in immensity, "The Life," indestructible, perfect, pure, needing nothing from without, inexhaustibly rich in himself. We think of him sending forth life and peopling space with countless forms of material and spiritual glory. All, wherever it is and whatever its form, is from him—He alone is the underived, independent, original, everlasting life.

But the God of the New Testament is not a quality, not an idea, or a process, or a law, not a thing, but a Being, an Agent. He is truly a Life; but as truly he is a Mind, *The Presiding Mind* of the universe. If created spirits are endowed with high capacities, and enriched with varied and vast knowledge, what must be the resources and the powers of the All-creating Spirit? "He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? he that formed

the eye, shall he not see? he that teacheth man knowledge, shall not he know?" The universe in all its kingdoms, in all the manifold departments of each of these kingdoms, in all the countless facts with their hidden principles which belong to each of these departments—the vast universe in the past, the present, and the future, must stand revealed in the clear light of the divine knowledge. All truth must dwell in the Infinite understanding, as in its native home. We bow down before the measureless heights, the unfathomable depths, the illimitable possessions of the uncreated Mind. Worship becomes not merely reasonable but necessary, a tribute which can not be withheld from such a Being. The nature of worship is understood and felt at once and as deeply the wickedness of substituting any material acts for the free aspirations of the soul.

Such a doctrine of God as we have imperfectly sketched surely demanded, for its announcement to the world, a great occasion and an extraordinary herald. But it was a Jew, a young man, a working carpenter, who published the doctrine eighteen hundred years ago, and to a poor woman. After a long journey, Jesus was sitting by the side of a well, in a retired place, when a woman of Samaria came to draw water. She belonged to a people with whom any other Jew would have scorned to hold intercourse; but *he* began to talk to her on the

subject of religion, and then and there proceeded to open to her mind, simply and familiary, some of the divinest ideas which have ever been put into the language of men. The Samaritans and the Jews were both wrong in their prevailing notions of worship and of God. To the one, God was in Samaria; to the other, in Jerusalem. But *he* taught her that the true God was not a local or national divinity, but a universal presence, and that true worship was always only spiritual, for the simple reason that the object of worship was a spirit. "Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem ye shall worship the Father . . . The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."[1]

This is a specimen of Christ's teaching, not an exception to it. Thus uniformly he turned the thoughts of mankind to the Infinite, Ever-living Intelligence, and summoned the world to believe and adore.

The idea of more than one Infinite Being is contradictory and impossible. On the supposition that there are two or more, they must be either in harmony or in conflict. But if they are in perfect

[1] John, iv. 22–24.

and everlasting harmony, this is in effect to say that they are identical, and nothing is gained by the notion of plurality. On the other hand, if they are in opposition one to another, such a conflict could produce nothing but universal anarchy and destruction—a state of things which finds no realization in the actual world. The existence of one Infinite Being harmonizes with the facts of the universe, and sufficiently accounts for them; and the reasoning is now perfectly familiar, as it is entirely satisfactory, by which it is made out, that the creation in all its regions indicates the hand and the mind of only one supreme Author and Ruler. The atom and the world, the insect and the man, the single globe and the countless spheres that people space; all, so far as our knowledge of them extends, are governed by the same great laws. The separate departments and kingdoms of nature, whether great or small, whether near or remote, whether inanimate, or animated, or rational, do not point to diverse origins, and do not exhibit subjection to diverse authorities; but, on the contrary, form a harmonious whole which must have originated with one mind, and must be governed by one supreme authority. All this is accepted, in our day, by many who do not bow to Christianity. But the world as a whole, nevertheless, groans still beneath a pantheon as monstrous and as vast, as any past age ever reared. Judaism,

Christianity, and Mohammedanism are the only existing systems of religion which recognize only one God; and it will not be questioned that the last owes this faith to the one or the other of the two former. The suffrages of mankind are *against* the doctrine of God's unity, by an overwhelming majority.

But we have to do with the ancient, not the present, state of opinion and of faith among mankind. The mildest form of departure from Divine unity in the ancient world was that which was found among the Chaldeans and Persians, nations certainly not the lowest at that time in the scale of advancement and civilization. Their creed comprehended two objects of supreme worship, one the author only of good, and another the author of all evil, and nothing but evil; of course, the first a purely benevolent, and the second a purely malevolent being, answering to the light and the darkness found alike in the natural and in the moral world. At this day, we possess far higher means of unraveling the dark phenomena of providence than were accessible to antiquity. We have learned to resolve physical into moral evil as its necessary cause, direct or indirect; and for moral evil itself, we have been taught to regard it as the voluntary abuse of the freedom of the created will. *We* may be able to perceive that in the very existence of a created will, there was involved the possibility of

its choosing to separate from the Divine will, a thing which, except by destroying the very essence of will, the physical omnipotence of God could not prevent, with which indeed physical omnipotence could have nothing to do. It may be clear to us, that all moral evil is the act of responsible because free creatures, the possibility of which was involved in their creation, and which no *mere power* could have prevented. *We* may therefore behold the one God doing only good, retrieving the effects of the sin of his creatures, putting down the evil which they originate, and bringing good out of that evil, so far as such a thing is possible. But in the absense of the aids and the light which we now possess, and in the view of the unnatural and confounding mixture of evil with good which moral providence exhibits, ancient dualism must be considered the most pardonable and plausible form of polytheistic error.

By the side of dualism, the enormous polytheism of the ancient world reared its head. The deification of spirits evil and good, of the elements of nature, of the signs of the sky, of human beings, of beasts, birds, reptiles, insects, inanimate wood, stone, clay, was widely, almost universally sanctioned. Sky, and earth, and sea, and mountains, and valleys, and forests, and rivers were peopled with gods and goddesses. It may be true, at the same time, that every ancient religion contained

the idea of some one god who was supreme among the many; but then this being was not, therefore, more worshiped than the others, but rather less. He might be *really* greater, but he was less important, less conversant with ordinary human affairs; and *him*, therefore, it was less necessary to invoke. It is not denied also, that there might be in the ancient world select individuals, who had ascended above the crowd of inferior divinities to the conception of one Almighty Being. But the earth, notwithstanding, was filled with gods and covered with temples. The whole ancient world had a scarcely exaggerated type of its theistic condition, in the capital of Greece—"It was easier to find a god than a man in Athens."

From Egypt and Persia, from Greece and Rome, from idols and temples, from priests, poets, and sages, we turn to the lowly Teacher of Nazareth. *He* proclaimed that God is One, and that the universe is one in its origin and its end, and is under the dominion of one Supreme Ruler, the King eternal, immortal, and invisible, the only wise God. From the beginning to the close of his ministry, he proclaimed one true God. Every where always he proclaimed the One God. No hint of any other doctrine than that of absolute divine unity is ever given; none other is named or noticed. "There is none good but one; that is God."[1] "That they

[1] Matthew, xix. 17.

might know thee, the only true God."[1] "There is one God, and none other but he."[2] The proclamation of God's unity by the voice of Christ was first heard throughout the land of Judea; but the sound was, by and by, wafted far beyond it. It echoed among the hoary idolatries of the world, and shook them to their foundations. The echo has not died away—it is heard *now*—it shall yet be heard above the clamor and hubbub of all rival faiths, and shall drown every other voice. One God, one supreme object of reverence and love, of worship and obedience—only One!

The occasion will arise, at a more advanced stage of our inquiries, for noticing with special interest the sentiments of certain heathen philosophers and moralists concerning God. It is here cheerfully admitted, that these sentiments are often very just, very noble, very strengthening, and very sanctifying, and are, in truth, the early promise of a diviner age. Light shone in the darkness, and these men almost saw the daybreak, and almost descried the first streaks of the dawn of a hallowed morning. Some of their ideas respecting God, his majesty and his purity, his wisdom, and even his mercifulness, astonish us by their profoundness and their grandeur. But they were entertained by few—oh, how few, out of the vast multitudes! They also partook more of the character of sudden and transient inspir-

[1] John xvii. 3. [2] Mark, xii. 32.

ations than of settled convictions; and they formed but a dim and shadowy prefiguration of the brighter revelations of a future age. We have already noticed the belief, in the ancient world, of one Being supreme among the gods, which was also otherwise modified, and took the form of faith in one supreme nature embodied in many separate divinities; and it can not be doubted that even this was fitted to correct, in some measure, the spirit of polytheism during "the times of ignorance." But this "Deus Maximus" was felt to be a cold mythical abstraction, rather than a loving father, and a fountain of living excellence. A God of perfect rectitude, purity, truth, and love, was virtually unknown to ancient paganism. Many of its deities were monsters of vice—impersonations of all that was impure, cruel, and vile. Their history was a tissue of superhuman abominations; and many of the very rites of their worship were revolting and unclean.

Turning to the Jewish nation, from whom so much might have been expected, we find that they had shockingly misrepresented the character, the attributes, the doings, the very nature of the True God. In the prevailing conceptions of the people, his justice was little else than revenge—his love partiality—his providence special and arbitrary interposition—his revelation a cabalistic secret—and

his infinite nature a huge extension of the caprices and passions of man.

Jesus of Nazareth revealed a Being necessarily opposed to all evil, and essentially righteous, true, pure, and good. All conceivable and all possible perfections dwell in his nature, and shine there in unclouded light. *This* God is Excellence, only Excellence, Excellence Infinite and Everlasting. The very idea of such a Being is Divine. Were there defect in God, even to the smallest amount, *he* could no more be the resting-place of the created mind; a dark shadow would fall upon his whole character, and a torturing and insupportable sense of insecurity would afflict the whole universe. But Jesus of Nazareth summons us to worship a Being in whom the intellect, affections, and conscience of man may safely repose—an object worthy of the eternal admiration, confidence, and love of all rational creatures—the Only Holy One, the God of Glory.

§ II.—THE PATERNITY OF GOD.

The relation which God sustains to man is only less important, than his Being and the properties of his Nature. "How is God connected with *me?* How is he affected toward *me?*" are questions of infinite interest to a rational being. The answer of the Teacher of Nazareth to these questions is

simple and explicit, and is conveyed in a single word, a word of profound significance and of surpassing tenderness—the word Father. To man this term belongs emphatically, and it is one of the wealthiest in human language, and men at least can have no difficulty in comprehending all its meaning. The relation which it indicates has no such interpretation, among other intelligent creatures, as it finds in this world. There is no fatherhood or childhood among angels, no derivation of being from one to the other. But men on earth are connected together in this extraordinary sense; and from the imperfect type existing among themselves, *they* at least are able to rise to the supreme reality in God. The human spirit is the offspring, the immediate and direct offspring, of the Everliving Spirit. It is capable of bearing and does bear, and it is the only thing that bears or is capable of bearing, a resemblance to God. When we have said that God *created* the heavens, the earth and all material things, we have exhausted all of which the subject admits. But it is not simply true, that he *created* minds also, *He is the Father of minds* and of nothing else.

The peculiar representation which is thus given of God's relation to man is beautifully suggestive, among other things, of authority, the very highest form of which known in this world is the parental. The power of a sovereign, however extensive it be,

is, after all, only conventional; it admits of being circumscribed or suspended; and there are many quarters of the world where no such thing is recognized or known. *All* earthly forms of authority, whether belonging to the political, civil, or social relations of men, are accidental and official, created by men themselves for their own purposes, and may be modified or entirely abolished by the power that created them. But the authority of a father over his child is founded in nature, and established by the Great God himself. This is not, like the others, a voluntary arrangement among men themselves, which they are at liberty to continue or to terminate as they please; but, on the contrary, it is a Divine constitution. Such authority as a father possesses over his child, so natural, so divine, so real, no human being besides can possess over another. *This*, accordingly, is the selected type of the supreme rights of God, and of that essential sovereignty which belongs to the Father of minds. No other explains, as this does, the foundation and the nature of Divine authority. There are, indeed, other terms which indicate the mere fact of sovereignty in God, and do so more pointedly and directedly than this. For example: *He* is compared to a king; a name which belongs to the highest secular office and the highest secular authority on earth. "The Lord is King forever and ever." His creatures are his subjects; he has

given them righteous and wise laws, and they must answer to him for obedience and disobedience. The comparison is obviously just up to a certain limit; but it is as obvious that, in many essential respects, it entirely fails. The king and his people are connected together only by one bond, that of authority and corresponding subjection. But the intimacy and tenderness of the association between God and his rational creatures are not expressed, or in any way suggested, by this phraseology. All that is conveyed by the word king—authority, rectitude, wisdom, power—is really contained in the word father; but there is very much conveyed by the word father which is not capable of being expressed by the word king. God is a King, but he is a Father-King; his subjects are his own children, and his government of them, in its very origin, and consequently in its essential spirit, in all its laws, and in all its acts, is strictly and only parental. God's Kinghood is a *figure*, his Fatherhood is the profoundest *reality*. He may justly, and in certain respects, be *compared* to a king; but he *is* a Father.

The relation in which God stands to them sheds amazing glory on intelligent beings of all orders. All souls wherever they are in the wide universe, are brothers; all have one Father, even God. The immense brotherhood, the vast family, it is hardly possible to embrace by any effort of imagination,

and some of its aspects are so appalling that we are even deterred from making the attempt.

The first-born of God, the elder sons of creation, unfallen angels, are associated in the invisible state with multitudes of disembodied, perfected human spirits. Another division of the great family is found on this earth, and it includes a vast majority of the earth's inhabitants. They are children, but they have wandered from their Father, have ceased to think of him, almost to know him, and with them God is patiently striving by his spirit in their minds and by his outward providence. A third division includes the reclaimed children of God in this world; those who have been arrested in their wanderings, have heard the voice of their Father, and have been subdued and won back to him. Between such reclaimed souls on earth and their God there must exist a singular tenderness of affection. They are his sons twice born, by generation and regeneration, his offspring at first, but also created anew and restored to him by trust and love. Of every one of them the Great Father proclaims, "This my son was lost and is found, was dead, and is alive again."

But a terrible darkness overshadows the remaining portion of the family of God, unreclaimed minds, human and angelic, in the invisible world. The entrance of sin and death among rational creatures is a tremendous and unfathomable mystery.

On earth, in the history of many a home, it is seen that some of the circle abide in affection and in duty, while others prove undutiful and lawless; and the counterpart of this, it is found, exists in a higher region. The family of God has been the scene of dark revolt. The one mystery of the universe, into which all else that troubles and confounds the reflecting may be resolved, is no other than this:—"The created will separating from the uncreated, struggling against it, and ruining itself by the mad effort." Multitudes of rebellious wills have thus doomed themselves to irretrievable perdition. But all the while, whatever God has done, he has done to avert, not to produce, spiritual ruin. How or why it has happened that the children have rebelled against their Father, and perished in their rebellion, is a secret which we can not unvail. But the act was their own, wholly and only their own, and as wholly and only in defiance and despite of Him who deserved nothing but obedience and love. Verily this is dark, impenetrably dark; but the reality of the fatherhood of God is luminous notwithstanding. It is a first principle, as stable and as sure as God's being; and all that it involves of tenderness and love is as indubitable as ever. The simple truth of our parentage abides, amid whatever mystery, God *is* our Father, the Father of minds.

This great fact was announced marvelously often

in the teaching of Jesus. Sometimes, when referring to God, he makes use of the more personal and intimate designation, my Father. "My Father's kingdom."[1] "My Father hath appointed me."[2] "My Father worketh hitherto."[3] "It is my Father that honoreth me."[4] But much oftener, generally indeed, he adopts the more comprehensive word, and speaks of God as *the* Father. "The Father hath life in himself."[5] "Neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, ye shall worship the Father."[6] "He that hath learned of the Father."[7] "Not that any man hath seen the Father."[8] "I will pray the Father."[9] "Whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father."[10] "I came forth from the Father and go to the Father."[11] "The promise of the Father."[12] "The times and the seasons the Father hath put in his own hand."[13] "I shall show you plainly of the Father."[14] Addressing not any select class, but all those indiscriminately who listened to his teaching, he represented God as the Father. This is the more significant, when it is recollected that the very work of Jesus on earth, at least an essential part of his work, was to make known God. The root of human sin was false views of God, misconception as to his character, imagining that what he

[1] Matt. xxvi. 29. [2] Luke, xxii. 29. [3] John, v. 17.
[4] John, viii. 14. [5] John, v. 26. [6] John, iv. 21.
[7] John, vi. 45. [8] John, vi. 46. [9] John, xiv 16.
[10] John, xv. 16. [11] John, xvi. 28. [12] Acts, i. 4.
[13] Acts, i. 7. [14] John, xvi. 25.

had declared might nevertheless not be true. This constituted the first sin ever perpetrated in our world, and was the sole cause of death, the death of the soul. On the other hand, it is declared that this is life, eternal life, "to *know* thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."[1] Ignorance was death; hence the life opposed to this death is knowledge, the knowledge of God; and to convey this knowledge was one of the highest purposes of Christ's mission. In all the labors of his life, in his teaching and in his cross, one grand design was to reveal to men what God really was, that they might be constrained to return to him. The question, therefore, is inexpressibly momentous, what does *Jesus* say concerning God, how does *he* represent the relation in which he stands to intelligent beings? Only one reply can be given to this question, Jesus reveals God as *the Father of souls.* And if there be significance in the word, if there be truth in the relation, this is of all things most sure, God loves infinitely his own offspring. *He* is a true Father, he is a perfect Father, without any of the blemishes or faults, and with all the excellences that are possible to the relation. Take from the word father all of error, weakness, caprice, with which it may ever be associated; heighten to infinity all in it that is tender, endearing, excellent—*that* is God. He is wise, he is

[1] John, xvii. 3.

righteous, he is mighty, his holy purpose shall stand, he must and will do all that is necessary for the good of the entire universe. But, besides power, besides wisdom, besides rectitude, besides immutability, there is an infinite tenderness in his nature. The heart of God is the heart of a father for all his rational offspring. Paternal love is the element in which God lives and reigns. Paternal love is the moving force in the spiritual universe, unbounded, unchanging, everlasting love; infinite desire to produce happiness, to fill creation with the largest possible amount of enduring joy.

Jesus of Nazareth reveals for the worship and love of man, a Spirit; One Spirit, the dwelling-place and Fountain of infinite moral excellence; a Being standing in the nearest possible relation to intelligent creatures—the Father of souls!

The world was ignorant of its high descent, of its Divine parentage. The mind of man, God's own child, had all but lost the sense of its origin. Jesus came near to tell men that they had still a Father, and that their Father pitied and loved them. He came to wake up in the bosom of God's fallen sons a cry after their Father, and to bring back the guilty wanderers to their home!

CHAPTER IV.

RECONCILIATION OF THE SOUL AND GOD.

To investigate the doctrine of reconciliation, in the sense of the theological schools, would require a much broader basis than the materials which belong to our proper subject afford. That subject deals only with the personal teaching of Jesus Christ, and with the bearings of his teachings *as he himself exhibited them*, on the wants of human nature and on the state of the world. It does not reach the later expositions of the Christian faith by the Apostles; and still less, that classification of its articles, which was not accomplished till long after their times; and least of all that elaborated system, the boast of modern theology, so minute in its details and marked by such rigorous regard to logical order. Two subjects were prominent in the personal teaching of Christ—the soul and God. But there was an obvious design in the selection of these subjects, besides their *intrinsic* importance. In interpreting the soul and in revealing God, Jesus aimed at more than simply communicating new

and ennobling knowledge to the world. What humanity needed was not merely to understand the soul and to understand God, it needed still more to learn how the soul might be restored to God, and how God might again dwell in the soul. The world knew and felt to its core that its spiritual relations were awfully deranged, but the source and cause of the evil it knew not. Jesus declared that the grand and sole cause was to be found in willful departure from God, departure in conscience, in affection, in thought. The two beings most nearly related to each other in the universe, man and God, the son and the Father, had become estranged and almost unknown to one another. On the part of God, indeed, there had been nothing but anxious love, agencies, messages, influences of love, from age to age, in order to overcome and subdue his children. *He* had never but seen and known them well in their wanderings and darkness; but *they* had almost ceased to know or think of him. The first deliberate act of separation from God proved not only itself an evil thing; it was a spreading evil, a self-perpetuating, self-propagating disease in the soul. Divergence, once commenced, increased rapidly, and separated man from God by an ever-widening gulf. The process of alienation was extensive as it was swift, just as when an inconsiderable speck spreads and deepens into a thick, black cloud, and at last clothes the whole heavens with

darkness. The true God was driven out from the spirit he had created, and man gradually lost almost all knowledge and all faith. The evidence of history, secular and sacred, as to the condition of the ancient world, is uniform and decisive. The uncertainty that hung around even the being of God, the profound ignorance of his nature and character, the multiplication of objects of worship, the conversion of the glorious One into an "image made like to corruptible man and to four-footed beasts and creeping things"—these all utter a language not to be misunderstood. The son of God had almost ceased to know that he had a Father, or who was his Father.

This ever-widening separation, again, between man and God, contained within itself manifold spiritual calamities. God is the Fountain of infinite rectitude, purity, wisdom, truth, and love; and the entire system of things created by him in all its parts, and especially the moral nature of his children, *as he formed them*, was an expression and embodiment of these principles. It belonged to the moral nature of man as constituted by God, it was its positive destiny to move in harmony with the Eternal Reason, and the Eternal Will, and thus moving, to be as surely blessed in its degree as God himself is. The act of willful departure from God, therefore, was not simply a violation of filial duty on the part of God's children; it was direct

separation from rectitude and wisdom and all moral excellence, and, in another form, as certainly, from happiness, from peace, from life as God had constituted life to man. Thenceforward there were two wills and two courses—the will of God and his infinitely wise, right and good system; the human will, and its course of folly, of moral evil, of necessary suffering.

But the secondary and remoter consequences of departure from God were not less lamentable, than its primary effects. The laws of spiritual providence possess an almighty, retributive energy. Never a wrong can be done to God without its recoiling on the wrong-doer, with direful violence. Men were faithless to God, and ere long they were false to themselves; they abandoned God, and ere long they became strangers to themselves; first they dishonored God, and then they degraded their own nature. In a world from which the true God had been banished the human soul was trodden in the dust, and its holier powers and its immortal destinies were shrouded in thick darkness. The first and highest relation, the relation to God, being violated, all other relations were in their turn overthrown, and the spiritual nature itself became a disorder and a ruin. Separation from God is not a partial, but a universal and unmitigated evil, it is death. The stream cut off from the fountain must be dried up, the branch severed from the tree must

wither the plant torn up from the soil must die. The root, not only of our animal, but of our intel lectual and moral life, is in God. We are branches of the mighty Tree of universal spiritual existence, we are streams from that Fountain, which alone supplies the water of life in whatsoever channels it flows. To be *in* God—that is, to think, feel and choose in harmony with rectitude, purity, wisdom, truth and love—is the original constitution, *the life* of the soul; it is its destiny, its freedom also, its glory, *its very being*. To depart from God, on the other hand, is to unite with folly, with wrong, with suffering. This is intellectual and moral ruin; it is truly death, such death as is possible to a rational and moral nature.

The union of minds, whether of the created with each other or of the created with the uncreated, can consist only in knowledge, love, confidence, and sympathy. For the real union of any two souls it is essential, first, that they understand, and then that they appreciate and esteem one another; that they cherish a mutual confidence and a sympathy in each others' pursuits, tastes, and aims. Ignorance, dislike, distrust, and want of sympathy, it is seen in a moment, must be death to their union; and, on the other hand, that union is obviously more living and more real as their knowledge and esteem of each other are increased, and as their mutual confidence, sympathy, and love are deep-

ened. The death of the human soul, in relation to God, is ignorance or false views of his character, indifference, or dislike, distrust, and want of sympathy. The life opposed to this death is right views of God. The source of peace, of holiness, of all that constitutes in the truest sense *being* to the soul in its relation to God, is right views of him, of his purity and his goodness, and of his merciful intentions toward his fallen children. It is a new and loving recognition of the character of God, it is recovered childlike trust in him, it is intelligent sympathy with his gracious procedure and plans. By knowledge, love, confidence and sympathy the uncreated and the created mind are reunited, and no other union than this is possible to them. This is the righting again of the first and highest of all our relations, our relation to God; the only righting again which is needed or is possible; and this is grounded in the free surrender of the understanding, conscience, and heart to that Eternal Will which is rectitude, purity, wisdom, truth and love. This is life, *re*-newed life. The stream is connected again with the living Fountain, the branch is grafted in again into the Tree, the plant is rooted again in the parent Soil. The prodigal son returns again to his Father's house and his Father's heart. The two beings the most nearly related to each other in the whole universe—God and man—who

were so awfully estranged are brought together reconciled.

The reconciliation of the soul and God was the highest end of the personal ministry of Jesus. He often spoke of this as connected with his life, and as still more mysteriously related to his death. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life."[1] "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."[2] "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep."[3] "I lay down my life for the sheep."[4] "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I may take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father."[5] "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of Man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the Scribes, and they shall condemn him to death."[6] "All ye shall be offended because of me this night; for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad."[7] In the reconciliation of men to God,

[1] John, iii. 16. [2] Matt., xx. 28. [3] John, x. 11.
[4] John, x. 15. [5] John, x. 17. [6] Matthew, xx. 18.
[7] Matthew, xxvi. 31.

Jesus expected and was prepared to sacrifice his life; and in point of fact he did sacrifice his life for this end. No devout examiner of the Christian books can doubt that the wonderful passages which have been quoted most distinctly teach that the death of Christ not only marks an era of the most solemn interest in the development of his religion, but fills an extraordinary place, and exerts an extraordinary power among the active forces of Christianity. Whatever other connections it may have, its relation to Jesus himself, as the highest expression of his love, and the strongest evidence of his invincible moral courage, and its relation to men as a mighty spiritual power acting upon the heart of the world, are beyond debate. But the whole of the ministry of Christ, and not the tragical close of it only, was a ministry of reconciliation. His life as well as his death was sacrificial and atoning. The soul and God at once, no longer divided by sin, by ignorance, enmity, distrust, but re-united and reconciled; *for this* Jesus both lived and died. The soul and God, as doctrines, constituted the chief theme of his teaching; but the doctrines were proclaimed because they contained the seed of life, of everlasting life to a dying world, and were fitted to originate a deep and vital change in men's consciences and hearts. In dealing with these doctrines, Christ's methods were various, but his aim was uniform · it was that men might recog-

nize God and be reconciled to Him. Sometimes he revealed the soul to itself, its greatness and responsibility, its condition and its danger, and thus prompted it to rise to its own lofty sphere of thought and of action. Again, he revealed God to the soul as its Father, from whom it ought never to have been separated, and in reconciliation with whom only it could have peace and life. On the one hand, a deep and living faith in the destiny, the wants, and the claims of their own spiritual nature; on the other hand, a deep and living faith in the Father of their souls—these constituted the grand, the pressing necessity of human beings in that age; they do so not less at this moment. Jesus sought, therefore, first to place *within* men a perpetual spiritual presence, and then to surround men with a perpetual Divine presence. By his life and by his death, he sought to restore God to man, and man to God. The spiritual restoration and regeneration of the world, in other words, the establishment of a reign of God in the human soul, forms the true idea of the personal ministry of Christ, the true idea of his life, the true idea of his death.

PART V

THE ARGUMENT FROM HIS WORK TO HIS DIVINITY.

Human systems of religious truth.—Mohammedanism.—Hindooism and Buddhism.—Talmudism.—Ancient Jewish Scriptures.—Stoicism, earlier and later.—Errors and Excellences.—Socraticism or Platonism.—Philo-Judæus.—Life of Socrates.—His Death.—His Faith and Hopes.—Christian views of them and him.—Christianity contrasted with Teaching of Socrates.—Solution, Christ's true Divinity.

If the representation of the teaching of Christ which has been offered be faulty, it is by defect, not by excess. For our purpose it may have been sufficient; but it is only by the *critical* and *minute* study of the discourses and sayings of Jesus that we learn to do *full justice* to his character as a Teacher, and that we gain an impression *at all adequate* of his spiritual opulence and power. The words of this Being, even on common occasions, discover a breadth and universality without example; they are always very simple, but profoundly suggestive, sometimes of inexhaustible force. Jesus not only announces separate ideas of the highest value, but his sayings may be likened to rich seeds or roots of truth, from which spring up manifold living growths

Again, in dealing with a profound, hard, dense subject, a single utterance of his shall discover it to its depths, and leave it luminous forever. The free and earnest soul deeply pondering the sentences which fell from his lips, feels itself in a lofty and holy region, where new expanses of light and glory in all directions break upon the sight; where forms of truth, long familiar, open freshly, and disclose unimagined wonders; and where an overpowering sense of reality, of living energy, and of Divinity is created. But this experience *can not be gained* without devout, profound and close study of the Gospels; and, as the study in the becoming temper of mind is prolonged, the experience, instead of fading, deepens marvelously.

The teaching of Jesus of Nazareth, as we have attempted to describe it in the last chapter, must now be compared with whatever portions of professed truth the world has received from other hands, in other places and ages. A spirit of strict impartiality must guide the comparison.

I. The latest noticeable antagonist of Christianity is the system which owes its birth to the genius, perhaps the piety, of Mohammed; and to which, on several obvious grounds, no inconsiderable importance belongs. It has spread itself over a large part of the globe; it is accepted by a hundred and fifty millions of the human race; and is, in itself,

immensely superior to all the forms of polytheism. The doctrine of One Supreme God, and of his all-ruling providence, is invaluable, and must have exerted a mighty influence for good wherever it has been received. But an examination of this system is unnecessary here, and chiefly on two accounts:—First, not to notice the extravagances and follies which it contains, it is at variance in many parts with the established facts of science, and in many other parts with just moral sentiments. Second, in all its really important aspects, it is a copy from Judaism, or from Christianity, or from both. None acquainted with the Jewish and Christian Scriptures —the latter and especially the former, much more ancient than the Koran—can doubt this fact for a moment. Altogether, in spite of its redeeming features, as a communication of spiritual truth to the world, a message respecting God, or respecting man, respecting the divine government, or respecting human destinies, it does not admit of being compared with Christianity.

II. At the opposite extreme in point of time from the religion of Arabia, and not less opposite in point of character, stand the Hindoo or Brahminical and the Buddhist systems. Our notice of them shall be very short, and it is on this account that we have ventured to depart in this instance from the chronological order. The great antiquity of these systems

invests them with interest and importance. Buddhism belongs to a period at least several hundred years before the age of Christ, and Brahminism is certainly many centuries earlier, and may have been even much earlier than this, indeed is probably the most ancient form of religion now existing in the world. The one holds possession at this day of nearly the entire population of Hindostan, the other is adopted by the three hundred millions of the Chinese empire. The Hindoo or Brahminical religion is in form and even in essence an enormous polytheism, if indeed it be not rather a true pantheism. The Buddhist system is virtually a philosophical atheism. In the one, whatever underlying unity it may be possible to discover, all the powers and parts of the universe are held to be proper objects of worship, are indeed truly divine, inasmuch as they are all alike emanations of the divinity. In the other there is no God but intellect. The Buddhist, though he may exalt the idea of an abstract intellectual unity, though he may recognize the concentration of the idea in saint or sage, or may fancy it diffused and distributed in innumerable forms, in reality worships nothing higher than his own soul, or the conception of that soul, developed under more propitious circumstances than his individual life has supplied. Eastern scholars, who have examined the Hindoo Vedas, inform us that, along with much of a very opposite character, they con-

tain passages of great sublimity on the holiest and grandest subject of thought, the Infinite Intelligence, the Fountain of Light and Life; and also many lessons of benevolence, purity, wisdom and justice. Christians receive the information with thankfulness, and are glad to believe that any such rays of light, however feeble and few, have fallen upon the darkness of the world. But they can not on this account conceal from themselves or the less deplore the idolatry, the pantheism, the moral abominations, the monstrous system of worship, and the monstrous forms of human society which have grown up beneath the shelter of Brahminism and Buddhism.

III. We return to the order of time; and, beginning with the age of Mohammed, and passing back from it toward the Christian era, we meet with certain Jewish writings, to which it is maintained the teaching of Jesus of Nazareth was largely indebted. The modern Jew asserts with much assurance, that all which is really valuable in the sayings of Christ, was borrowed, more or less directly, from the Talmud. That collection of traditions, and of expositions of the ancient Scriptures, known by this title, consisting of the Mishna or text, and two commentaries, the one the Gemara of Jerusalem, and the other the Gemara of Babylon, has long been regarded by the Jewish people, and is still regarded, with the highest veneration. We

do not profess to be able to discuss the still debated question of its antiquity and authority, nor is such discussion at all necessary for our purpose. It is admitted freely, that much of what the Talmudical books contain was current among the Jews in the time of Christ, and probably long before it, and therefore it is possible that *he may* have borrowed from this source. It is admitted, also, that these books present some important religious and moral truths; but it is at the same time just as undoubted, that the mass of their contents is frivolous, and even false. At all events, the Jews themselves do not deny that these writings are far inferior to the ancient inspired Scriptures. They may interpret, expand, or impress the revelations of the Old Testament, but they themselves offer no new revelation, and add nothing to the divine light before shed down from heaven. It will, therefore, be satisfactory and direct, at once to compare the teaching of Jesus with the system of truth in the ancient Scriptures.

IV. The peculiar poetical imagery, and the magnificent and gorgeous diction, which distinguish many passages of the Old Testament, are palpably wanting in the Christian Gospels. The lawgiver, the reformer, the poets, and the prophetic sages of ancient Israel speak in the name of Jehovah, in grand and solemn tones; but in the New Testa-

ment an apparently humble individual, using only the most familiar and simple language, claims to instruct the world; so that if there be sublimity here, it must lie in the thoughts themselves, not at all in the form in which they are presented. Christians have not been reluctant to honor the inspired seers of Israel; on the contrary, they entirely believe that the Old Testament and the New are not hostile, but harmonious revelations. They find in the ancient devotional poetry of the Jews a profound analysis of religious experience, and a freshness and fervor of pious feeling altogether unsurpassed, and they rejoice to acknowledge that there is a large amount of imperishable truth which is common to both Scriptures. But that the *later* is borrowed from the *earlier*, and is only an imitation, a repetition of it, is not only denied, but it is maintained that *this* is both more lucid and more complete than *that*, and also contains discoveries which are entirely unknown to the more ancient book. We look in vain in the Old Testament for the radiant and overflowing benignity of the New—in vain for the universality, simplicity, and freedom that distinguish the New. The doctrine of a reign of God in the minds and hearts of *all* men is not found there, nor the uniform assertion of the pure spirituality of worship, and of the purely spiritual nature of the Great Object of worship, nor the luminous revelation of the soul in its reality, greatness, ac-

countability, and endless life, or of that attribute of the divine nature which most of all endears God to man—Paternity. The soul and the Father of the soul, the return of the soul to its Father, and the reign of the Father in the soul, these, in their highest form, belong peculiarly to the teaching of Jesus, and they exalt it, immeasurably above not only all Talmudical and Rabbinical writings, but even the divine oracles of an earlier age.

V. About three hundred years before Christ, Athens, rich in great men and in systems and sects, listened to the claim of a new teacher, Zeno, the founder of a new school. The system of the Stoics merits attention in this place, not so much in its early as in its later form. It became at last a theology and an ethical code more than either a physical or metaphysical philosophy, and at the commencement of the Christian era, and for two centuries later, it exerted no inconsiderable influence on the world. The names of Zeno, of Cleanthes, of Epictetus, and of Marcus Antoninus, are not forgotten at this day, by those who are interested in the genuine efforts of the human soul, and who watch the strugglings of the light of God with the darkness of the world. At the same time, it must not be forgotten, that *the stoicism* which is represented to us by this name was the product, not of a single mind, but of the combined efforts of many

noble minds for a succession of ages. They, wisely profiting by the defects and errors of other systems, extracting however the best portions of them and making important additions to them, succeeded at last in forming a new whole, which reflected great glory on the intellectual and moral powers which were capable of producing it. It was this finished and final form of the stoical system which was extensively embraced before the age of Jesus, and for two centuries later. And it is this, the work of many minds and many ages, which is to be compared with the labors of a single person during a course of only three years, the probability, amounting nearly to certainty, being that the work was indebted to this very person for some of its later and most valuable peculiarities.

It would be easy, without any injustice, to produce a humiliating account of the errors of stoicism. We can not wonder that, on subjects which to this day defy speculation, such as the essential nature of things, the reasonings of the Stoics should be puerile and contradictory. The idea of infinity or incorporeity, they were able to attach to nothing, except the vacuum which encompasses the universe. An infinite, even an incorporeal God in the proper sense of the term, they knew not. Philosophers of this school speak of the *incorporeal* reason, but they can mean only the *unembodied* reason. Between God and matter they recognized no *essential*

distinction, and their highest conception of the difference was expressed when they said that God was the *informing* principle of matter. Hence many of them identified God with the ether, which spreads itself over the exterior surface of the heavens; and this ethereal substance they imagined contained the vital principles from which all forms of existence are produced, but not by the will of a creator, but by necessity of nature. If to them Reason or God was underived, so also was the matter of the universe. By no sect was the doctrine of absolute fate more thoroughly adopted than by the Stoics. As they *invariably represent* it, a necessary chain of causes and effects encircles the whole universe, the divine reason and material things alike. "Whatever that be," says Seneca, "which has determined our lives and our deaths, it binds the gods also by the same necessity. Human and divine things alike are carried along in an irrevocable course."[1]

Large and just exception must be taken to the doctrine of this school on the subject of moral excellence, its foundation, its nature, and its laws. Piety toward God, as they described it, is little else than a callous surrender to irresistible fate; self-government is crucifixion of the best affections of the heart; the highest crime against God and

[1] Quidquid est quod nos sic vivere jussit sic mori, eadem necessitate et Deos alligat. Irrevocabilis humana pariter ac divina cursus vehit.—SENECA, *Op.* Parisiis, 1761, p. 78.

against nature, self-destruction, is vindicated, and, in certain circumstances, even commanded as a duty; and benevolence, instead of being generous love, is devotion to an abstract idea, a cold calculation, an act of homage to reason. The human race is a unity, of which no part can be injured without evil to all the rest; and such injury, therefore, they argued, it is the part of wisdom to prevent or remedy. The obvious tendency of some parts of the stoical system was to nourish pride, to create heartlessness, and even hypocrisy, and to make men unnatural and artificial. The virtuous Stoic was proudly and coldly strong, was superior to pleasure and pain, would relieve the afflicted, and protect himself against personal injury, but would at the same time, repress all pity for others, and all sorrow on his own account.

But, in spite of numerous and serious errors, the ethical system of the Stoics was wonderfully grand, and wonderfully pure. When we think of principles like the following—"that the highest end of life is to contemplate truth, and to obey the Eternal Reason and the immutable law of the universe; that God is to be revered above all beings, to be acknowledged in all events, and to be universally submitted to; that the noblest office of wisdom is to subject the passions, dispositions, and conduct to reason and virtue; that virtue is the supreme good, and is to be pursued for its own sake, and not from

fear or from hope; that it is sufficient for happiness, and is seated only in the mind, and being so, renders men independent of all external events, and happy in every condition; that the consciousness of well-doing is reward enough without the applause or approbation of others, without even their knowledge of our good deeds, and that no prospect of self-indulgence, and no fear of loss, or pain, or death must be suffered to turn us aside from truth and virtue;"—when we hear such principles as these distinctly maintained by the sages of this school, it is impossible to withhold from them our admiration, and to repress a profound feeling of thankfulness to the Great God. *These* are some of the redeeming features of the stoical morality, which rendered it incomparably superior to all the ancient systems, with one wonderful exception, the system of which Socrates was the founder and Plato the chief expositor.[1]

VI. Upward of a hundred years earlier than

[1] In the Enchiridion of Epictetus, and in his lectures (both compiled by his disciple Arrian), and in the writings of Seneca, especially his De Providentiâ, De Sapientis Constantiâ, De Brevitate Vitæ, and De Vitâ Beatâ, the errors and the excellences of Stoicism are fully discovered. Very touchingly also, are we brought into contact with the system, as a personal experience, in the Meditations of Aurelius. "Marci Antonini Imperatoris, eorum quæ ad seipsum, libri XII." Oxon. 1704. Especially lib. iv. cap. 10, 24, 29, 33, 34, 41, 44, 45; also in some parts of the Noctes Atticæ of Aulus Gellius.

the time of Zeno, Socrates questioned, perplexed, stimulated, and instructed the people of Athens. His name, and that of his disciple Plato, are associated with what is justly regarded as the most luminous and refreshing passage of ancient profane history, whether as it respects philosophy or as it respects religion. The *philosophy* of Plato differs in form, still more in its details, and especially in its completeness and refinement, from that of Socrates; but in ethics and religion the master and the disciple are entirely identified; and it would be idle to attempt to distinguish between them.

About the time of Christ, or shortly afterward, a profound interest in the doctrines of Socrates and Plato was awakened throughout the Jewish world, by the writings of Philo of Alexandria. These writings are a compound of Judaism, Orientalism, and Platonism; but the Platonic element very decidedly predominates. It may be safely pronounced impossible that Jesus of Nazareth can have been acquainted with the works of the Alexandrian Jew. It is quite incapable of proof, and is most improbable, that any of these works were even in existence, in the lifetime of Christ. If they were, it can have been only a short while, and nothing is more unlikely than that Jesus, in an obscure village, and in the position of a working man, had even heard of them, far less examined them. The fact, however, is interesting, and it directly bears

on our investigation, that not only the Gentile, but even the Jewish world, during the primitive age of Christianity, was familiar with the system of Socrates and Plato.

It is not necessary here to point out the defects and errors of that system. They are confessedly important and numerous. For example, Socrates distinctly maintained the pre-existence of human souls, before their entrance into the bodies of the present race of men. He taught also the transmigration of souls—at least their *possible* occupation of other bodies after the death of those they now inhabit—and, as the punishment of their vice, their occupation of the bodies of irrational animals. It must be admitted further, that his reasonings on the immortality of the soul are not seldom as unsatisfactory as they are subtle and refined. And then, the last words which he uttered, desiring that an offering he had vowed to Esculapius might be paid by his friends, are a melancholy testimony against him. It was clearly his conviction, that a wise and good man ought to worship the gods recognized by the country to which he belonged.[1] His faith in a plurality of objects of worship was undisguised and sincere; but it is at the same time as

[1] Hence Xenophon expresses his amazement that Socrates was charged with denying the gods of Athens, as if nothing could be more utterly groundless: *ὡς οὐκ ἐνόμιζεν οὓς ἡ πόλις νομίζει θεοὺς ποίῳ ποτ' ἐχρήσαντο τεκμηρίῳ.*—*Comment.* lib. i. cap. 1, 2. Berol. 1845.

certain that he recognized and adored a Supreme God, the Almighty Creator and Ruler; and he speaks of this Being in language which may well excite astonishment. "He, who arranges and upholds the universe, who is the fountain of all that is beautiful and good, and who, for the use of his creatures, maintains the creation always uninjured, entire, and undecaying; . . . this Being, conducting these affairs, is invisible to us, yet is made manifest by the grandeur of his operations."[1] Socrates maintained that the first principles of morality, which are common to all mankind, are laws of the Supreme; and the distinction between them and mere human laws he finds in the fact, that they can never be transgressed with impunity. "They who violate the laws established by the gods suffer a penalty which it is not possible to escape in any such way, as some who violate the laws established by men are able to escape the consequences of transgression."[2]

The life of Socrates must not be overlooked, when attempting, in however brief a manner, to

[1] *ὁ τὸν ὅλον κόσμον συντάττων τε καὶ συνέχων, ἐν ᾧ πάντα τὰ καλὰ καὶ ἀγαθά ἐστι, καὶ ἀεὶ μὲν χρωμένοις ἀτριβῆ τε καὶ ὑγιᾶ καὶ ἀγήρατον παρέχων. . . . . οὗτος τὰ μέγιστα μὲν πράττων ὁρᾶται, τάδε δὲ οἰκονομῶν ἀόρατος ἡμῖν ἐστιν.*—*Comment.* lib. 4. cap. 3. 13.

[2] *ἀλλ' οὖν δίκην γέ τοι διδόασιν οἱ παραβαίνοντες τοὺς ὑπὸ τῶν θεῶν κειμένους νόμους, ἢν οὐδενὶ τρόπῳ δυνατὸν ἀνθρώπῳ διαφυγεῖν, ὥσπερ τοὺς ὑπὸ ἀνθρώπων κειμένους νόμους ἔνιοι παραβαίνοντες διαφεύγουσι τὸ δικὴν διδόναι.*—*Idem.* cap. 4. 21.

understand and estimate his system. The testimony of those who knew him best is unshaken by all the efforts that have been made to overthrow it; and there is no sufficient reason to doubt that he was a sincere, upright, disinterested man, and, withal, singularly pious, according to the light he had received. His disciple and intimate friend, Xenophon, declares that he never undertook any work without first asking counsel of the gods. A sense of God, a strong faith in the influence of God, and a deep desire to be governed by it, were habitual to his soul; and, in all probability, this is the amount of what he intended to convey, when he constantly and openly referred to a demon—a presiding spirit within him—whose voice he had heard and obeyed from his childhood. The idea on which the public life of this man was founded, is unusually impressive. The youth of Athens had long been corrupted, as he thought, by a class of instructors who set little value on *what* they taught or others believed, but great value on dialectic power and rhetorical art, by means of which even falsehood might be commended to the minds of men. Socrates resolved to lift up goodness and truth, in themselves, as the noblest *end* of living; and to show that the office of philosophy was to deliver mankind from the dominion of prejudice, ignorance, and vice, to inspire them with the love of virtue, and, through a careful intellectual and

moral discipline, to guide them to happiness. His position, from the first, was that of a philosophic moralist; and, choosing Athens as his sphere, he devoted his life to the diffusion of what he believed to be the highest truth. His entire time was spent in this work; he sought for scholars, not only among men of rank, but also among laborers and mechanics; and, contrary to the general practice in that day, he exacted no remuneration from those who attached themselves to his school. "It does not accord with what is usual among men," he says, in his memorable defense, "that I have neglected all that belongs to myself, and have tolerated for so many years this neglect of my private affairs. Your concerns, on the other hand, I have constantly attended to, appealing to you individually, like a father, or an elder brother, and urging you to the cultivation of virtue. If, indeed, I had gained any thing by this means, and had accepted payment for my exhortations, there might have been some reason for my conduct; . . . . it appears to me that I offer proof sufficient that I am speaking truly, when I name *my poverty*."[1] The man who thus spoke

[1] *οὐ γὰρ ἀνθρωπίνῳ ἔοικε τὸ ἐμὲ τῶν μὲν ἐμαυτοῦ ἁπάντων ἠμελῃκέναι, καὶ ἀνέχεσθαι τῶν οἰκείων ἀμελουμένων τοσαῦτα ἤδη ἔτη, τὸ δὲ ὑμέτερον πράττειν ἀεί, ἰδίᾳ ἑκαστῳ προσιόντα ὥσπερ πατέρα ἢ ἀδελφὸν πρεσβύτερον, πείθοντα ἐπιμελεῖσθαι ἀρετῆς. καὶ εἰ μέντοι τι ἀπὸ τούτων ἀπέλαυον, καὶ μισθὸν λαμβάνων, ταῦτα παρεκελευόμην, εἶχεν ἄν τινα λόγον. . . . . ἱκανὸν γὰρ οἶμαι, ἐγὼ παρέχομαι τὸν μάρτυρα ὡς ἀληθῆ λέγω, τὴν πενίαν.—Apol. Soc. in Plat.* oper. Lipsiæ, 1829, tom. i. p. 63.

was often persecuted by the vicious and the false in the course of his life. "You, my fellow citizens," he said, appealing to themselves for the truth of his statements, "have been unable to tolerate my manners and my words; they have grown ever more and more oppressive and hateful to you, so that you now long to be relieved from them."[1] At last he was condemned to death; and for this reason, chiefly, whatever the ostensible grounds might be, that his fellow-citizens could no longer endure his merited rebukes.

The defense of Socrates, followed as it was by his death, is perhaps the most remarkable, all circumstances considered, of human productions. He describes the aim of his life:—"I pass my time doing nothing but persuade you, both young and old, to care so earnestly neither for the body, nor for treasures, nor for any other thing, as for the soul, by what means it may be ennobled in the highest degree."[2] He announces his settled resolution, whatever it may cost:—"Oh, Athenians, I esteem and love you, but I shall obey God rather than you; and while I live, and as far as lies in

[1] *ὑμεῖς μὲν ὄντες πολῖταί μου, οὐχ οἷοί τ' ἐγένεσθε ἐνεγκεῖν τὰς ἐμὰς διατριβὰς καὶ τοὺς λόγους, ἀλλ' ὑμῖν βαρύτεραι γεγόνασι καὶ ἐπιφθονώτεραι ὥστε ζητεῖτε αὐτῶν νυνὶ ἀπαλλαγῆναι.*—*Idem.* p. 72.

[2] *Οὐδὲν γὰρ ἄλλο πράττων ἐγὼ περιέρχομαι ἢ πείθων ὑμῶν καὶ νεωτέρους καὶ πρεσβυτέρους μήτε σωμάτων ἐπιμελεῖσθαι, μήτε χρημάτων πρότερον μήτε ἄλλου τινὸς οὕτω σφόδρα ὡς τῆς ψυχῆς ὅπως ὡς ἀρίστη ἔσται.*—*Apol.* p. 61.

me, I shall never cease philosophizing, or urging and remonstrating with whomsoever I may meet, in the very same terms I have been wont to use."[1] He presents a confession of his faith on a most important subject:—"I declare that the highest good to man is this, to spend every day in forming opinions respecting virtue and other subjects, such as you have heard me discussing, scrutinizing both myself and others; and that a life without inquiry is no life for man."[2]

After the sentence of death had been pronounced, he tells his judges that he might have escaped had he employed another method of defense. But he adds: "It is no matter of regret to me now, that I have defended myself in this manner, but I should much prefer death from taking this course, to life on *that* ground (that is, having followed any other course) .... This truly is hard, oh Athenians, to escape death; but it is far more difficult to avoid wickedness."[3] "You, therefore, oh my judges,

[1] Ἐγὼ ὑμᾶς, ὦ ἄνδρες Ἀθηναῖοι, ἀσπάζομαι μὲν καὶ φίλω, πείσομαι δὲ τῷ Θεῷ μᾶλλον ἢ ὑμῖν, καὶ ἕωσπερ ἂν ἐμπνέω καὶ οἷός τε ὦ, οὐ μὴ παύσομαι φιλοσοφῶν, καὶ ὑμῖν παρακελευόμενός τε καὶ ἐνδεικνύμενος, ὅτῳ ἂν ἀεὶ ἐντυγχάνω ὑμῶν λέγων οἱάπερ εἰωθα.—*Idem*, p. 60.

[2] λέγω ὅτι καὶ τυγχάνει μέγιστον ἀγαθὸν ὂν ἀνθρώπῳ τοῦτο, ἑκάστης ἡμέρας περὶ ἀρετῆς τοὺς λόγους ποιεῖσθαι, καὶ τῶν ἄλλων περὶ ὧν ὑμεῖς ἐμοῦ ἠκούετε διαλεγομένου, καὶ ἐμαυτὸν καὶ ἄλλους ἐξετάζοντος, ὁ δὲ ἀνεξέταστος βίος, οὐ βιωτὸς ἀνθρώπῳ.—*Idem*, p. 71.

[3] οὔτε νύν μοι μεταμέλει οὕτως ἀπολογησαμένῳ, ἀλλὰ πολὺ μᾶλλον αἱροῦμαι ὧδε ἀπολογησάμενος τεθνάναι ἢ ἐκείνως ζῆν. .... τοῦτ' ἤ χαλεπόν, ὦ ἄνδρες Ἀθηναῖοι, θάνατον, ἐκφύγειν ἀλλὰ πολὺ χαλεπώτερον, πονηρίαν.—*Idem*, p. 74.

ought to be hopeful in reference to death, and to keep in mind this one truth, that there is nothing evil to a good man, whether in life or in death, nor are the matters which concern him neglected by the gods."[1] "I am not at all incensed against those who have condemned me, or my accusers."[2] "If one, arriving at Hades, shall be set free from so called judges, and shall find righteous judges, . . . would this be distressing banishment? . . . . . For my part, I should be willing to die often, if this be true."[3]

After his condemnation, awaiting the hour of his martyrdom, Socrates spoke in such language as the following, to the friends who continued their faithful attendance upon him:—"It would be ridiculous for a man who during his life has habituated himself to live like one who was very near to death, to be afterward distressed when this event (which he had long anticipated) actually overtook him. . . . . Shall one who verily loves wisdom, and entertains the strong hope that he shall find that which de-

[1] Ἀλλὰ καὶ ὑμᾶς χρή, ὦ ἀνδρες δικασταί, εὐέλπιδας εἶναι πρὸς τὸν θάνατον, καὶ ἕν τι τοῦτο διανοεῖσθαι ἀληθες, ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν ἀνδρὶ ἀγαθῷ κακὸν οὐδὲν οὔτε ζῶντι οὔτε τελευτήσαντι, οὐδὲ ἀμελεῖται ὑπὸ θεῶν τὰ τούτου πράγματα.—*Idem*, p. 79.

[2] Ἐγωγε τοῖς καταψηφισαμένοις μου καὶ τοῖς κατηγόροις οὐ πάνυ χαλεπαίνω.—*Idem*, p. 79.

[3] Εἰγάρ τις ἀφικόμενος εἰς ἅδου, ἀπαλλαγεὶς τουτωνὶ τῶν φασκόντων δικαστῶν εἶναι εὑρήσει τοὺς ὡς ἀληθῶς δικαστάς, ... ἆρα φαύλη ἂν εἴη ἡ ἀποδημία. . . . . ἐγὼ μὲν γὰρ πολλάκις ἐθέλω τεθνάναι, εἰ ταῦτά ἐστιν ἀληθῆ.—*Idem*, pp. 77, 78.

serves this name nowhere except in Hades (shall such a man) instead of rejoicing to depart, be afflicted at dying?"[1] "Does not the soul thus conditioned (the wise and good soul) depart to that which is congenial to its nature, to the unseen, the divine, the undying, the wise? Arriving there (in Hades), its lot is to be blessed, to be emancipated from error and ignorance, and fears, and wild appetites, and all other earthly evils; and, as is said in reference to the initiated, truly does it spend the remainder of existence with the gods."[2]

These were the words of a heathen, nearly five hundred years before the advent of Jesus Christ, of a man who had never seen a line of revelation, so called, and could have had no knowledge of the existence of such a thing; a man who lived in the very center of polytheism, who was himself a child and an avowed disciple of polytheism, and who to the last religiously observed the worship of

[1] Γελοῖον ἂν εἴη, ἄνδρα παρασκευάζονθ' ἑαυτὸν ἐν τῷ βίῳ ὅτι ἐγγυτάτω ὄντα τοῦ τεθνάναι οὕτω ζῆν, κἄπειθ' ἥκοντος αὐτῷ τούτου, ἀγανακτεῖν. . . . . φρονήσεως δὲ ἅρα τις τῷ ὄντι ἐρῶν, καὶ λαβὼν σφόδρα τὴν αὐτὴν ταύτην ἐλπίδα, μηδαμοῦ ἄλλοθι ἐντεύξεσθαι αὐτῇ ἀξίως λόγου, ἢ ἐν ἅδου, ἀγανακτήσει τε ἀποθνήσκων, καὶ οὐκ ἀσμενος εἶσιν αὐτόσε.—*Phædo in Plat.* oper. ut supra, tom. i. pp. 116, 117.

[2] Οὔκουν οὕτω μὲν ἔχουσα, εἰς τὸ ὁμοῖον αὐτῇ τὸ ἀειδὲς ἀπέρχεται, τὸ θεῖόν τε καὶ ἀθάνατον καὶ φρονίμον; οἱ ἀφικομένη ὑπάρχει αὐτῇ εὐδαίμονι εἶναι, πλάνης καὶ ἀγνοίας καὶ φόβων καὶ ἀγρίων ἐρώτων καὶ τῶν ἄλλων κακῶν τῶν ἀνθρωπείων ἀπηλλαγμένῃ· ὥσπερ δὲ λέγεται κατὰ τῶν μεμυημένων, ὡς ἀληθῶς τὸν λοιπὸν χρόνον μετὰ θεῶν διάγουσα.—*Idem*, p. 138.

inferior divinities. His name and that of Plato, and the names also of Zeno, and Epictetus, and Antoninus, have come down to our times associated with the sentiments which have been quoted. The hope is not vain that, in that dark day, and beneath all the polluting shadows of paganism, there may have been many, like to these sages, of whom no record has descended. Above all, we can believe that there may have been multitudes of the obscurer classes on whom the influence of Socrates, Plato, and others came down as a healing and purifying power. The hope is inexpressibly refreshing to the Christian soul. God, who, for the sake of the world, and in order to preserve to it the truth which it had well-nigh lost, conferred singular distinction on Judea, had not abandoned the rest of mankind, but drew near to them also, in his secret illuminations and in his sanctifying agencies. The Holy Ghost that touched the soul of Hebrew prophets and teachers, also brooded over the spiritual chaos of the old pagan world, so that gleams of divine light flashed many times across the deep of ignorance and moral evil. It enhances the value of ancient Holy Scripture, it even adds a new significance to it, when we come to know that, far away from its sphere, the erring soul of man was always struggling toward the source of light, and that from the uncreated sun there fell upon it many a sanctifying and guiding ray. The direct and

special provision for the coming of the promised Saviour of men, which was made in the Jewish institutions and worship, becomes not less, but more precious, when we understand that, at the same time, over all the world, in the efforts of the human reason, the agitations of the human conscience, and the ceaseless tumult of human affairs, God was conducting, by the merciful influence of his Spirit, a more general preparation for the same grand event. To the Spirit of the living God, striving with man every where and always, must be traced whatever moral goodness and holy truth sprung up in the ungenial soil of ancient paganism. The fact of such divine striving recognized, our first feeling is unfeigned thankfulness to God; the second is deep sympathy with human souls in the day of the world's darkness, with wise, earnest, virtuous souls in the agony of their search after truth, and in the burden of uncertainty, disappointment, and fear by which they were often crushed. In the number of these ancient spiritual heroes, none wiser or nobler shall we find than Socrates and his illustrious disciple. In their case, we recognize with joy a merciful agency of God. Instead of seeking to depreciate the recorded sayings of the Athenian sage, we acknowledge with wonder that, in some of the highest regions of moral inquiry, they embody an amount of truth which, in justice to humanity, to spiritual providence, and to the very

office of Christ, Christians above all men are bound to understand and extol.

But, by the side of the best of all the ancient systems of morality and religion, we are now prepared to place the teaching of Jesus of Nazareth, and, with this view, we shall first recall, in the briefest form, the chief subjects of that teaching.

"A universal spiritual reign, the reign of rectitude, purity, wisdom, truth, love, and peace, the reign of God in the understanding, conscience, heart, and will of men." "Human sin, Divine pardon." "Prayer." "Providence." "Worship." "Human virtue grounded in piety toward God." "Among the essential elements of virtue, humility, meekness, forgiveness, pure love, self-sacrifice." "Piety and virtue, a true life of God in the soul." "Spiritual truth received into the soul, the seed of this Divine life, and the germ of the reign of God in man."

Yet more specially: "The doctrine of the human soul, its reality, greatness, accountability, and endless life." "The doctrine of God, his Spirituality, Unity, Moral Perfection, and Paternity." "The doctrine of the reconciliation of the soul and God; God in his holy mercy looking upon the soul; and the soul, in penitence, faith, and filial obedience, yielding itself to God."

This enumeration is almost enough; there are doctrines here of inexpressible importance, perfect-

ly original. To name no others, those of sin and pardon, of virtue, as summed up in pure love, in sacrifice and service for others, of an ever brightening and holy immortality, and of God's fatherhood, have no place in the sayings of the Athenian philosopher. Altogether we behold here an originality, a consistency, a living energy, a grandeur, and a depth which can be found nowhere else. Socrates and Plato astonish us by the utterance of imperishable and grand ideas; but they are not only few in number, but are unconnected. Christ offers to the world an extended and harmonious multitude of spiritual doctrines. He, too, is the only teacher who always speaks with certainty and precision. The disciples of Socrates were often left in deep perplexity by their master. One occasion may be instanced: when he was conducting a discussion with two of their number respecting the immortality of the soul. "They (that is Socrates, and Cebes, and Simmias) seemed to disturb us afresh, though we had been fully convinced by the previous arguments, and to plunge us again into unbelief."[1] This was the frequent experience of the best men in the ancient world, in reference to the most vital questions, on which, at other times we find them expressing the utmost certainty. Even Socrates often

[1] Ὑπὸ τοῦ ἔμπροσθει λόγου σφόδρα πεπεισμένους ἡμᾶς πάλιν ἐδόκουν ἀναταράξαι καὶ εἰς ἀπιστί ιν καταβαλεῖν.—*Phædo in Plat.* oper. tom. i. p. 150.

employed such ambiguous language as the following: "*If* death be a removal hence to another place, and *if* what is said of the dead be true,"—"those who live there (that is in Hades) are thenceforth immortal—*if* at least what is said be true." The concluding words of his apology were these:—"But the hour of separation has now come; I go to die, you to live; but which of us is destined to an improved being is concealed from every one except God."[1] On the great subjects of futurity, the soul, and God, Socrates often utters profound and imperishable truth; but even on these, as well as less momentous questions, he sometimes exhibits lamentable hesitation and doubt. The teaching of Jesus Christ, on the other hand, is a region of unclouded and serene light. From the first, a deep conviction is awakened that *here* is perfect knowledge and faith which can not be shaken. Christ reveals many truths unheard before; but both on these and on such as may be found elsewhere, he exhibits unwavering certainty. On all the great subjects of his ministry, his utterances are determinate and uniform. Not a shadow even of hesitation rests for a moment on his language. The conflict of other minds between faith and doubt he knew not; but however high the subject, and environed with difficulties,

[1] Ἀλλὰ γὰρ ἤδη ὥρα ἀπιέναι, ἐμοὶ μὲν ἀποθανουμένῳ, ὑμῖν δὲ βιωσομένοις. ὁπότεροι δὲ ἡμῶν ἐρχονται ἐπὶ ἀμεινον πρᾶγμα, ἄδηλον παντὶ πλὴν ἢ τῷ θεῷ.—*Apol.* tom. i. p. 79.

he spoke with absolute but meek assurance. Always and every where, he spoke with absolute but meek assurance.

Christ, also, is the only teacher who always expresses himself, not only without doubt, but without effort. Socrates and Plato reach some lofty and holy thoughts, but it is with great labor, and after protracted and severe study. Jesus Christ utters the highest truths with perfect facility, and presents them in familiar and simple language. *He* has needed no laborious and prolonged search, he employs no severity of argument, and gives no sign of effort. Truth is native to his soul, and his words are the immediate and natural and unlabored outpourings of the fullness of his mind.

We are constrained to ask, who was this Jesus Christ; what could he be, when even the sage of Athens suffers by comparison with him? While this question waits solution, differences between Christ, and Socrates, and Plato, still wider and more startling than those which have been named, crowd upon the mind.

First.—Socrates must have labored thirty or forty years as a teacher of Philosophy, and Plato a still longer period, *both* ever necessarily increasing their power, as well of acquiring as of communicating truth. Jesus Christ labored only three years.

Second.—Socrates had advanced to the middle period of life before he assumed the position of a

public guide, and he was in his seventieth year when he died. Plato also took no part in forming the minds of others till he had reached middle life, and he was in his eighty-first year when he died. Jesus Christ was only thirty-three when he was cut off, quite a young man.

Third.—Socrates, before he ventured to teach, spent many consecutive years under the most celebrated philosophers then in Greece, in studying all the branches of learning with which that age was conversant. Plato having before been taught by other celebrated masters, was for eight years a pupil of Socrates. After the death of Socrates, he spent many years in traveling into various and remote countries, in pursuit of knowledge in all its branches, conversing with the priests of Egypt, perhaps even the sages of India, certainly the philosophers of Italy and Greece. Jesus Christ was never beyond the limits of Judea in his life, excepting in childhood. He had access to no famous school and to no celebrated masters in his own or other countries. The common amount of education he may have received, and for the rest he wrought with his hands to gain his daily bread. In place of study, there was only manual labor up to the time when he began to teach the world.

The question must be renewed, and with an earnestness yet more intense, who was this Jesus Christ? The three points of contrast just named

between him and Socrates and Plato, do not exhaust his history. The *whole* of the outer conditions of his earthly life, even at the risk of repetition, must be deliberately placed before our minds. Jesus Christ was a man of Nazareth, in Galilee of Judea, whom no hint of the learning and science of other lands and of the discoveries and speculations of the world's sages, could by any possibility have reached. He was a man of humble origin; his parents, his relatives, his associates, were all poor, and he himself was poor, to the last very poor. He was a working carpenter, and had spent his life in a workshop till he was thirty years of age. He had enjoyed no advantages of education, of access to books, or of introduction to superior society, but such as were open to the lowest of the people. He was unaided by the patronage of the wise or the great. He was a young man who died at the age of thirty-three. But this person, in a ministry of three years, did infinitely more for mankind and for all succeeding ages, than either Socrates or Plato, or both together were able to do, each with the labor of thirty or forty years, with all their maturity of wisdom, and experience, and with all the advantages of learning, and travel, and patronage. What the wisest and brightest souls in the ancient world, what even the inspired prophets of Israel never accomplished, was accomplished by a *young, obscure, Galilean mechanic.*

Even if the teaching of Jesus Christ had been inferior in substance and in form to that of Socrates and Plato, the overwhelming differences between him and them which have been named would yet have defied all the ordinary methods and means of interpretation. But how much more must this be true, when that teaching is not inferior, when it has been proved to be incomparably superior! It exhibits doctrines infinitely momentous which were unknown in Athens and in Rome. What is still more, it may be affirmed without misgiving, that of all the spiritual truth existing in the world at this moment, not only is there not a single important idea which is not found in the words of Christ, but *all the most important ideas* can be found nowhere else, and have their sole fountain in his mind. From his mind there shone a light which neither Egypt, nor India, nor Greece, nor Rome, had ever kindled, which no age before his day ever saw, and none since, except in him alone, has ever seen.

These, then, are the simple historical facts of Christ's *state* on earth, on the one hand, and of his *work* among men on the other hand; and they demand interpretation. The supposition that *he* was merely a messenger and a prophet of God, a man divinely selected and furnished for a Godlike work, does not satisfy, never can satisfy, the extraordinary conditions of the case. The world has heard the voice of many God-sent men, the organs

through which imperishable truth, in various amounts, has been conveyed; but not one of these can, on any just ground, be likened for a moment to Jesus Christ. We have found that he is not merely different from them, but, in the most material respects, incomparably above them all. Hence an explication which is perfectly reasonable and adequate in their case, is palpably insufficient, is unsatisfactory and useless, in his case. He stands unapproachably distant from all that ever were honored with a Divine mission; he is not a link in a chain of succession, but is absolutely alone, and has no predecessor and no successor. The multitude, the originality, the harmony, and the grandeur of his revelations, separate him, by an impassable line, from all that arose before his time and the fact that in two thousand years not a single important contribution has been added to the body of spiritual truth which he left, cuts off all succession. He is alone in that work, immeasurably transcending all others in human history, which he achieved for the world; alone in the unexampled circumstances amid which he accomplished it—circumstances which, according to all human modes of judging, seemed to render the accomplishment absolutely impossible; and therefore alone in constitution of being, in attributes and in nature—organically, essentially alone.

The work of Christ, and the outer conditions of

his life, as these have been represented by us—that is to say, the age and place in which he appeared, his early death, and his entire social circumstances and position—the work of Christ and the outer conditions of his life *must* be capable of being harmonized, for *they were combined in fact.* All admit, and are compelled to admit, that *they were combined in fact.* Skepticism is baseless, is impossible here. There stands the record; say nothing of its inspiration so called, but its antiquity and general authenticity are indubitable, are, in point of fact, undoubted by all who have the slightest pretensions to learning or candor. *There* in the record, is *the* teaching, incomparable, alone. It is connected with the name of Jesus, it came from his mind; if not, whence did it, could it come? To attribute it to the writers of the New Testament themselves makes no alteration in the difficulty, except to increase it indefinitely by the addition of new and more inexplicable circumstances. Among all concerned, the only individual to whose mind, with any show of reason, the teaching *can* be ascribed, is Jesus himself. Certainly *he* was the teacher, if there was a teacher at all; and no subtlety of criticism, and no mythical theory, and no modification of it can set aside this fact. *He*, being what we have seen he was, in his external circumstances and history, *was* the teacher; in other words, the work of Christ among men, and the outer condi-

tions of his life, *were combined in fact;* and, therefore, it can admit of no question that they must be capable of being harmonized in principle. But we repeat, that on all ordinary and acceptable grounds they are utterly irreconcilable. No record of history, or of individual experience, and no law of the soul, lends us any assistance in this case; but what we have to interpret, though once realized and presented to the senses of men, is directly in the face of history, experience and psychology. Hence we maintain, and have no resource but to maintain, that the principle of harmony in this instance must be sought for, in a region altogether new and extraordinary—a region which ordinary history and experience, and psychology, do not include. There must be some profound mystery *in the very constitution* of this Unique Personality, to account for such teaching as his in such circumstances as his. *He* can not be merely human, because human laws and human experience do not interpret the formation of his life. *He* must be essentially and organically separate from man, because the facts of his history transcend immeasurably all that mere man ever accomplished or attained.

The case with which we have to deal may still further be briefly stated, thus:—"There are difficulties which every thoughtful mind must recognize, when we attempt to connect the teaching of Jesus Christ with the outer conditions of his life·

the difficulties are real, great, undeniable; and the question is, how shall they be best solved—which of the professed or possible solutions is most rational, most satisfactory? In the outset, one thing is clear, that the Supreme Being must not be supposed to be limited, either in his choice of instruments to work out his purposes, or in his mode of employing their agency. Granting that there never was another such messenger of eternal truth as Jesus Christ, it does not follow, from this alone, that Jesus Christ was more than human. He who created the mind of man can surely impart his revelations to it in different matters and forms, and can act upon it in very different ways, when he pleases to use it, as the organ through which he shall teach the world. Successive and sudden inspirations, rising one above another in amount and in kind, in a manner which it would be hard to limit, are in this way conceivable and possible. We can even go to the length of imagining the mind almost passive in the Divine hand, as in a kind of intellectual ecstacy or rapture—active, indeed, in receiving, and afterward in conveying, what is imparted to it; but yet its powers so held down and absorbed in the state of mere receptivity that it shall itself need, in common with others, to investigate, in order to understand, the messages of truth which it has announced. It is believed that in this way the ancient seers of Israel were

sometimes mere organs through which inspirations passed from God to mankind, and were sometimes themselves as ignorant as others of the deep significance of their own utterances. Such a thing, at least, is not in itself inconceivable, and it is not irreconcilable with the experience and the laws of the soul; but it can afford us no help in solving the mystery of Christ's teaching. *He* was not a mere and almost passive channel of conveyance, from God to man *He* was not an instrument employed on certain special occasions, which occasions having passed away the instrument remained the same as before, unpenetrated by any change arising from the temporary purposes to which it had been applied. *He* was not an occasional, spasmodic, or ecstatic utterer of Divine messages; but, during his whole ministry, though its period was short, *he* was a free, intelligent, deliberate utterer of truth *which was his own*, howsoever it had come to him. If there be one thing more certain than another, it is that Jesus spoke *from* himself, out of the depths of his own being. Whoever was his teacher, whatever was the hidden process of instruction through which he had been conducted, and wherever might be the true source of his knowledge, that knowledge was *his*, truly *his*, dwelling in his understanding, his conscience, and his heart. That which he uttered to men had first become his own, inwoven with the very texture of his soul, identified with

its truest possessions, its freest movements, its progressive developments. It was not *imposed* at the moment by another, it was not an immediate *impartation* to him from without, but a true creation from within, a produce of his own. His soul had risen to that truth which he announced, had mastered it, had verily *become* it; so that not merely the glory of proclaiming it fell to Jesus, but all the inward opulence and power which the real knowledge of it supposed *belonged* to his mind.

We assert, without fear of contradiction by any competent and candid thinker, that under the conditions amid which Jesus was placed, such knowledge and such spiritual opulence and power were morally and even physically impossible to a mere human mind. God never acts in defiance of the nature and laws of the soul, but always in harmony with them: we speak with reverence, God *could not* act in defiance of the laws of the soul which he has himself established. This is not the region of miracle, so called; and mere physical omnipotence has no place here. Mind is not to be forced. God could destroy the soul; but, continuing to be what it is, God can act upon it only in harmony with its laws. Now, the fact that a young man, only thirty-three, a poor man, a Galilean carpenter, uneducated, unprivileged, and unpatronized, *rose to* a profound, far-reaching, lofty wisdom, and to an illumination and wealth of soul which are without

example in history, stands in direct contradiction to all other psychological experiences, and to all ascertained psychological laws. But it is a fact, nevertheless; and there must be *some* ground on which it can be explained. Jesus *can not* have been merely what he seemed to be, and his mind *can not* have been merely human, and in all respects constituted and conditioned as other human minds are. In sober reason, there is no choice left to us but to believe in an organic, an essential, a constitutional difference between him and all men; in other words, in an incarnation, in this unparralleled instance, of Divinity in humanity.[1] Admitting an original, an incomprehensible union between the mind of Christ and God—admitting a mysterious and constant access of Christ's mind to the infinite Fountain of illumination, of excellence, and of power, *such as was possible to no mere human being* —then, but only then, we can account for spiritual phenomena which—*all facts as they are*—on no other ground are explicable or even believable. It is only by the admission of the real union of Divinity with the human soul of Jesus Christ that a solution can be found of historical and psychological difficulties, which are otherwise as insurmountable as they are undeniable. The idea of incarnation in all its meaning is, indeed, incomprehensible; but we can very distinctly comprehend, *that it must*

[1] See Note A, at the end of the chapter.

be true nevertheless, because, otherwise, facts of which we have the fullest evidence are absolutely unbelievable. The incarnation is a profound mystery; but intelligence and candor will allow that this is the very region where mystery was even to be looked for. We are compelled to believe that *this* mystery is a truth; because, if not, the marvelous phenomena of the life of Jesus, which we can not deny, are not only a mystery, and one even more inscrutable and insupportable, but a direct contradiction.

Our argument is to receive important confirmation from another region of the life of Jesus. But, even here, that life has supplied presumptive evidence amounting to the strongest proof, of a doctrine which, awfully deformed and corrupted indeed, has yet *somehow* found its way into most of the philosophies and religions of the world—the doctrine of Incarnation, God in man. "They shall call *his name* Emanuel, which, being interpreted, is *God with us.*"

NOTE A.

This is the only other position which merits consideration for a moment. The idea that Jesus was more than man, yet not God in man, that he pre-existed as an angel, or as the first of creatures, we believe, has now passed away from all sober minds. It is so purely fictitious, and so obviously encounters all the difficulties, without having the peculiar grounds, or any of the compensating advantages of the higher hypothesis, that we question if even a solitary supporter of it could be found in the present day. Few or none who are convinced that Jesus was not, and could not possibly be *merely* man, will hesitate to adopt the conclusion, that he *must have been* God in man.

BOOK THIRD.

THE SPIRITUAL INDIVIDUALITY OF CHRIST.

IN SIX PARTS.

PART I. His Oneness with God.

II. The Forms of His Consciousness.

III. The Totality of His Manifestations before the World.

IV. The Motive of His Life.

V. His Faith in Truth, God, and the Redemption of Man

VI. The Argument from His Character to His Divinity.

THE peculiar conditions of the earthly life of Jesus have now been examined. The time and place of his advent, his parentage, his social position and his early death, strike the least reflecting, and give extraordinary significance to his subsequent history. They therefore first received consideration.

It seemed proper, then, to look at the more prominent and public developments of a life which formed itself under such peculiar conditions. The position to which Christ actually rose, his own idea of that position, the commencement of his public course, the qualities that marked his public appearances, and his teaching itself, contrasted with the speculations and discoveries of other lands and ages, were successively reviewed.

We presume now to venture still nearer to this mysterious personality. Advancing beyond his outward circumstances and his public life, we meditate a close inspection of his inner spiritual being, the sphere of his conscience and his soul. We seek to penetrate that holy place where, exposed to the eye of the Omniscient, lie all the hidden principles of

the outward life. We seek to look within the vail, into the innermost chamber of that spiritual temple which the heart of Jesus inclosed, and with anxious impartiality and with devout fear, we approach the secrets of this untrodden region.

The proper spiritual individuality of Jesus Christ was evinced in his oneness with God, in the forms of his consciousness, in his manifestation before the world *as a whole*, in the motive of his life, and in his calm assurance of Triumph.

PART I.

HIS ONENESS WITH GOD.

Communion between created and uncreated Mind.—Human side of the Doctrine.—Effort to conceive God.—Faith in His Nearness to us.—In His Love.—Sense of Dependence.—Veneration.—Trust.—God listening and responding to the Soul.—To Christ, God the greatest Reality.—Christ alone with God.—Original, habitual Union.—Walked with God.

COMMUNION between the uncreated and the created mind is a contested subject in the theological schools. We mingle not in the conflict, but venture to express the profound conviction that, if God be the Father of minds, then the idea is very rational and very refreshing that he should mercifully regard his intelligent offspring, and be ready to converse with them; and, on the other hand, that they should seek to communicate with him. But it is a hard effort for the created mind even to conceive of God, much more to commune with him. A perfectly just conception of God is impossible. The Infinite can never be contained within the finite. The utmost possible to us is to *strive* to approach, for we can never even approach, however distantly,

toward the idea of an infinite nature, infinite excellence, infinite duration; the idea of the uncreated, all-creating Mind, the eternal dwelling and source of life, truth, love, and power. And even this *striving after a distant approach* to the conception of God is more than we can long endure. We are overwhelmed by our own poor thoughts, and can only bow down in helpless wonder, before Him who is past finding out. "It is high as heaven, what canst thou do? It is deeper than Hades, what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea."

To stretch toward the Infinite is the first effort; the second is to connect the Infinite with our personal sphere, our movements, interests, and destinies. Nothing is more certain than that God is as cognizant of every human soul as if it alone existed in immensity. The changes in our outward condition, and all the passing shades of emotion and of volition within, must be instantly perceived by him. His awful presence is unutterably near to us, the open Infinite Eye gazes upon us every moment. When this faith is once reached, life becomes invested with wondrous sanctity; but it is not enough. Does the Great Being who is so mysteriously near, also love the creatures he hath made? Perhaps the open Infinite Eye is cold as it is luminous, and in conducting the vast interests of the universe, God is indifferent to what is passing in individual minds,

and heeds not whether they suffer or rejoice, or how they appeal to his throne. The conviction is indispensable, that the nature of God, in its relation to our minds, is essentially *parental*. How this conviction is legitimately reached, on what basis it must rest in order to be permanent and safe, can not be shown in this place, but it must be reached. It must be believed that God is profoundly interested in the human soul; that the eternal Father stands in the tenderest relation to that soul, and that Divine sympathy and Divine love are not less but more real, than human sympathy and human love.

The mind of man in deep earnest stretching up toward the infinite God, believing in his mysterious nearness and in his love, presumes to utter itself before him. At such a moment, its first feeling is that of absolute dependence. It is in the very condition to trace back existence, preservation, and all good for the present or for the eternal life to the uncreated Source. Along with this sense of dependence, there is deep veneration, not simply love, but such love as finds its proper object only in God—love mingled with awe, love taking its very highest form, the form of reverence. There is superadded simple trust, trust in parental love commanding infinite resources, the confiding look and confiding heart of a child. The mind of man gazing up to the Infinite Nature with mingled dependence, rev-

erence, and trust, opens and utters itself to Omniscience.

This is the human side of communion, but there is here, as yet, no interchange. There is outgoing from below, but no response from above. On earth the communion of one human mind with another is profoundly mysterious, and it is far more rare than we imagine. Intercourse by looks, words, and acts, is universal; but real mental fellowship, communion of intellect with intellect, conscience with conscience, heart with heart; communion of soul with soul is excessively rare. It is always and necessarily imperfect. The real and great differences between one soul and another, and the consequent proportional defect of sympathy between them, mental and moral incompetence and poverty on the one side or the other, or both in different respects, constitutional or acquired reserve, shame, pride, and fear, necessarily prevent the entireness and the freedom of communion. But such as it is, it is real, and there are palpable expressions and tokens of it, and a palpable medium through which it is conducted. There is no palpable medium of intercourse between the human soul and God, and on the side of God there are no palpable expressions and tokens of its reality. The region belongs to pure faith; we *only believe* that God *is responding* to us; *that* is literally all. But this faith is rational, and it is purifying and exalting. If one human

soul welcomes and answers the utterances of another, it is morally certain that the Eternal Father will meet the advances of his own child. God must perceive every movement of the soul toward himself, and can we doubt, that he will greet the rising aspiration in his pity and love? The belief is in harmony with the highest reason, that the Uncreated responds to the created mind, pours illumination, breathes down peace, and sheds forth living and healing influences. Divine fellowship is the selectest and most solemn of all mysteries. It is a blessed moment in the earthly history of a soul, when it seeks an audience of God, and believes that God is mercifully listening and responding to it. This is heaven on earth, an earnest of the highest dignities and the noblest joys of the life to come. Communion with God is the most exalted spiritual privilege, and the habit of communion is the proof of the most matured spiritual excellence.

Jesus Christ possessed this privilege in a higher degree than it was ever possessed by man, and he exhibited this excellence in a maturity which was never beheld on earth before or since. On reading his life, the impression is irresistible that his soul was full of God. The selection of a few great occasions could not convey to us an adequate conception of the constancy and closeness of his union with the Invisible Father. His labors were incessant; he was in the midst of the ignorant, who

needed to be instructed, the suffering, who needed to be relieved, and the mourners, who needed to be comforted. The demands made on his sympathy, his wisdom, and his power, were perpetual, and he delighted to meet them all. It was not often that he could rob his public work of the hours which might have contributed to his solitary personal joy, but he was never separated from God in thought or in heart. The word oftenest on his lips was this, "the Father,"—"the Father"—"God!" Spontaneously, naturally, constantly, the idea rose, because it was a fixed reality, the greatest of all realities in his mind. No being was so present to him as God; not merely in the hours of peculiar and prolonged communion, but always and every where God was every thing to him. Habitually he brought the Invisible and Uncreated into the sphere of the visible and the created; in his mind the two were one. Even amid multitudes, who had no sympathy with the movements of his inner nature, he knew how to be alone with God, and could convert the crowded city into a religious solitude.

But the deep yearnings of Jesus' soul, the Divine force within, often drove him into literal solitude, that he might give unrestrained and full expression to his spiritual emotions. In every one of the eventful crises of his life, he gave affecting testimony to the reality of his oneness with God. "He went into a desert place, and there prayed."

"He went up into a mountain to pray." We find that he spent *days* and *nights* also, in solitary prayer and communion with God. After his baptism, and before entering on his public course, he went into the wilderness and spent weeks alone with God. On one occasion, after a succession of public labors, we are told that "rising up a great while before day, he departed into a solitary place, and there prayed." When the people sought to take him by force, in order to crown him, he withdrew to pray. On the night of his betrayal, thinking more of the sorrows of his disciples than of his own, "he lifted up his eyes to heaven and prayed" for them. In the garden of Gethsemane, overwhelmed with agony, he prayed, saying, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." His agony deepening, "he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground."[1] But that oneness with God, of whose depth many such testimonies were given, was not occasional, but habitual. It was not cherished from a sense of duty, but it governed him irresistibly as an original law of his being. The spontaneous tendencies of his nature, and not the mere conviction of duty, or the force of outward circumstances, drew Jesus to God.

Christ's attendance in the temple or the syna-

[1] See Matt. xiv. 23, and xxvi. 36; Mark. i. 35, and vi. 46; Luke, v 16, and vi. 12, and ix. 28; John, xvii. 1.

gogue, his sacrifices and offerings, and his regard to places, rites, and days—things which in that age were thought to enter into the very essence of religion—are little noticed in the Gospels. But in the habits of his mind, in his words, and in his uniform example, he revealed that which alone gave worth to outward services and sanctity to the synagogue and the temple. He revealed the soul and God, and the reality of intercourse between them. Standing erect in his heavenward tendencies and in his purity, he laid open the spiritual world, its occupations, its eternity, its glory—like a majestic column, round whose base there lies an atmosphere of pollution and darkness, but on whose summit there streams perpetual sunshine. Jesus walked on the earth, but his soul was in the skies with God, and in the light of that upper sphere he ever viewed the world below, and conducted all his ministrations among men.

PART II.

THE FORMS OF HIS CONSCIOUSNESS.

Nature of Consciousness.—Its Universality.—Value of its Testimony.—Christ's Consciousness.—Highest Development.—Expressed to the last.—Interpretation of it.—Proof of the Validity of His Claims.

THERE is an inward sense, the counterpart of the senses of the body. These reveal the external, this the internal world. The eye and the ear assure us respecting the existence of material objects; consciousness assures us respecting the actual facts within our minds, our experiences, motives, thoughts, and aims at every movement. In this, all mental phenomena is realized; by these all material phenomena are perceived. Consciousness belongs to men universally; it is one of the acknowledged attributes of the human soul, and not the least wonderful. Every human being is distinctly conscious of what is passing in his mind at any moment, of the evil and the good in him, his insincerity or sincerity. It is one of the mysteries which are, nevertheless, undoubted facts of our

spiritual constitution. In spite of what may be thought by others, whether unfavorable or favorable; in spite of what a man himself may assert and *cause* to be believed respecting him; in spite of what he wishes to believe, and even sometimes persuades himself he does believe, deep under all this there lies a clear sense of what is really within him at the moment, and to a man himself this testimony is irresistible. The evidence of consciousness to the individual mind is to the full as decisive as the evidence of the external senses, in their peculiar sphere. A thousand arguments and a thousand difficulties are of no weight in the face of what we see and hear; and a thousand arguments and a thousand difficulties can in no degree disturb the clear testimony of the inward sense. There is, in fact, nothing which can bear comparison with this in directness and in strength. That of which a human soul is distinctly conscious as a present fact within it, is of all things most indubitable, because, otherwise, its original constitution and the Former of that constitution would be impeached. If either the outward sense or this inward sense could not be trusted in their proper sphere, there could be nothing certainly true in the universe; the very foundations of all certitude and of all confidence would be overturned. The reality of that inner fact of which a human soul is perfectly con

scious, is identified with the existence, the veracity, the sincerity, and the goodness of God.

The evidence of consciousness is available only in a very limited degree, beyond a man himself. Generally the inward testimony is anxiously concealed from other men; through mere carelessness it may be misunderstood, or it may be designedly mutilated and falsified. But if a faithful report of it could be obtained—if we were able, by satisfactory evidence, to ascertain beyond doubt that what was said to be a positive consciousness was really such, this testimony would be as convincing and as valid to others as to the man himself, and we should reach a species of proof than which none can be higher or stronger. The Gospels profess to report, in Christ's own words, the voice of his soul to himself, and it is this report which must now be impartially examined; Christ's own statements respecting what he himself found and felt in his nature.

This Being, then, never uttered a word to man or to God which indicated the sense of a single defect in his whole life. The Old and New Testaments record the lives of many godly and honored men—Abraham, Moses, Samuel, Elijah, Ezekiel, John, Peter, Paul, and others; but they all confess faults and sins, and repent and throw themselves on the mercy of God. Religious biography leaves on the mind an impression of the same character,

only more deeply marked. Without exception, the lives of men who feared and loved God, and who in intention and effect were workers for him and for their race, exhibit inconsistencies and imperfections. Such men utter humiliating confessions, and severe self-reproaches; and we are not surprised that they do; it would create astonishment if they did not. The range of general biography includes the illustrious men of all nations, and of all times—men distinguished for their moral qualities, their intellectual powers, their acquirements in all the various branches of knowledge, the positions of influence to which they have risen, and the reputation they have won, and which, perhaps, has lived through a succession of ages. It includes the originators of useful and sagacious schemes, the conductors of movements which have conferred extensive and lasting benefit on the world. It includes all the great benefactors of mankind, the instructors, examples, and guides of their race. Now we assert, without fear of contradiction, that in each individual, within this almost limitless range, there is found much that is wrong in the sight of God and men, many a deficiency, many a weakness, many a false step, many a positive sin. What is equally to our purpose, not one of all this vast number ever professes to be free from errors and sins, or even seeks to be thought so.

But Jesus Christ uniformly expressed a distinct sense of faultlessness and perfection. *He* never once reproached himself, or regretted any thing he had ever done or said. *He* never uttered a word, to indicate that he had ever taken a wrong step, or neglected a single opportunity, or that any thing could have been done or said more or better than he had done and said. Here is a being who was always calmly, perfectly conscious of faultlessness. "I do always those things which please the Father."[1] "Which of you convicteth me of sin?"[2] "If I say the truth why do you then not believe?"[3] "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me."[4]

There is a still more mysterious utterance of Christ's inward nature. We find him avowing the most extraordinary sense, not merely of personal perfection, but of official greatness. "I am not alone, for the Father is with me."[5] "I and my Father are one."[6] "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work."[7] "He that sent me is with me; the Father hath not left me alone."[8] "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish his work."[9] We do not profess to exhibit the full meaning of these holy texts: but it can not be disputed that they convey this at least, a conviction

[1] John, viii. 29. [2] Ib. viii. 46. [3] Ib. viii. 46.
[4] Ib. xiv. 30. [5] Ib. xvi. 32. [6] Ib. x. 30.
[7] Ib. v. 17. [8] Ib. viii. 29. [9] Ib. iv. 34.

on the part of Jesus that he was *at one* with the Father, in some high and merciful enterprise. To his own consciousness it was certain that he was obeying not his own will only, but the will of the Father; that he was unfolding not his own thoughts only, but the thoughts of the Father, and that he was carrying on, not a work of his own merely, but the work of the Father. And on this inward sense of relation to God there was built up a conviction of the strict individuality, the solitary grandeur of his mission. "*I* am the bread of life."[1] "*I* am the light of the world."[2] "*I* am the way, the truth, and the life."[3] "*I* am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine; and my sheep hear my voice, and they follow me, but a stranger will they not follow."[4] "*I* am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."[5] "All things are delivered to *me* of my Father, and no man knoweth the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son shall reveal him."[6] "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see *my* day, and he saw it and was glad."[7] "Many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them, and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them."[8] "The queen of

[1] John, vi. 35. [2] Ib. viii. 12. [3] Ib. xiv. 6.
[4] Ib. x. 14, 4, 5. [5] Ib. x. 10. [6] Matthew, xii. 27.
[7] John, viii. 56. [8] Luke, x. 24.

the South shall rise up in judgment with the men of this generation, and shall condemn them; for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold *a greater than Solomon is here.* The men of Nineveh shall rise up in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonas, and behold *a greater than Jonas is here.*"[1]

But more mysterious, more awful still, were the words in which Jesus sometimes pronounced himself. On several separate occasions he employed in the hearing of men, language which human lips could not have uttered without impiety. "Thy sins be forgiven thee." "The Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins."[2] "The hour is coming when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live."[3] "When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit on the throne of his glory, and before him shall be gathered all nations."[4] The deep sense of his mysterious greatness which these passages indicate, was expressed by Jesus from the first, and it was never lost or even impaired. At the last, when darkness gathered around him, he shrank not from the avowal. Immediately before his crucifixion, he said to the judge who condemned him, "Thou couldst have

[1] Luke, xi. 31, 32.
[2] Matt. ix. 2. 6.
[3] John, v. 25.
[4] Matt. xxv. 32.

had no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above."[1] "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into this world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. My kingdom is not of this world; if my kingdom were of this world then would my servants fight that I should not be delivered unto the Jews, but now is my kingdom not from hence."[2] From first to last, in his humiliation and in his sufferings, and at his dying hour, just as in the outset of his career and the freshness of his public fame, this was the same great and dread Being.

The frequent utterance of a mysterious and distinctive consciousness, on the part of Jesus, can not be disputed. To say nothing of the inspiration of the New Testament; unless it be utterly fabulous and false, if even in the most loose sense it be authentic, this is certain, that Jesus often expressed without reserve a sense of personal faultlessness and perfection; and what is more, a sense of the incomparable dignity and sacredness of his official position. In his own conception, he stood between man and God, in a crisis of the world's history which had no parallel. He was alone in the ages, bearing a burden for which no former age was ripe, and by which no subsequent age was to be oppressed. He was doing a work in which he could have no part-

[1] John, xix. 11 [2] Ib. xviii. 36, 37 See Channing's Sermon, p. 428

ner; he was alone in responsibility, in power, and in rank!

Such, supposing the Christian record to be of the smallest historical value, is the indubitable fact. Can it be accounted for—can any important conclusions be founded upon it—what does it really involve?

1. Perhaps some of Christ's injudicious and overzealous followers suggested to his mind the pretensions which he avowed. This is not conceivable: for the consciousness which he expressed comprehended far more than any of them believed, or even understood at the time, much as they honored and loved him.

2. Perhaps the language of Christ originated in mere vanity and conceit. It must have been consummate, unparalleled vanity, if it was vanity at all; but this is plainly incompatible with the sobriety and solidity of his deportment. Besides, the idea expressed was too lofty to have had such a despicable origin; it was too spiritual, and too closely connected with God, with religion, with the unseen world; unless, indeed, he had been utterly reckless and profane.

3. Perhaps it originated in a deep-laid scheme of ambition. The prompt answer to this suggestion is that such was not Christ's character at all. He was no crafty and designing hierophant or demagogue. His own declaration was simply true, and

was verified by his entire course, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." Interested motives, in any form, never once indicated their presence in him by a single token during his whole life.

4. Perhaps it originated in enthusiasm.[1] But only an enthusiasm amounting to raving insanity could have uttered itself, in such language as his. If its origin was enthusiasm at all, it must have been the very insanity of enthusiasm, and his grave and meek life decisively forbids this supposition. There was nothing, either in his sayings or his doings incoherent, contradictory, wild. Both manifested entire self-possession and the calmest wisdom.

5. Perhaps it originated in mere mistake. With all his excellence, intellectual and moral, was not Jesus Christ nevertheless singularly mistaken on one point? Perhaps he fancied himself greater and better than he really was. Without the slightest intention to deceive, with entire sincerity and honesty, he uttered *what he thought* was the voice of his consciousness; but it was a mere fancy, a serious, but not altogether unlikely, mistake. It occurs to us to ask in this connection, was Jesus Christ also mistaken, when he uttered in the ears of men truths, which the wisest and best souls ever sent into this world before had never imagined? Was he also

[1] Channing, p. 427.

mistaken, when he bestowed on mankind a body of living, spiritual truth, which all the systems taken together, before known, do not approach, and to which nothing worthy to be named has since been added? In such a matter as this, was *he* mistaken, who had revealed the deepest secrets of the nature of God, or the human soul, and of the future state? Was *he* unable to report faithfully a thing so near at hand as the voice of his own consciousness, and in the stead of that voice, did he publish a groundless conceit to the world? These things do not comport; it is impossible that they should be both true of the same individual. The ground neither of injudicious foreign influence, nor of vanity, nor of deep-laid ambition, nor of enthusiasm, nor of honest mistake, can be taken in this case. The wickedness or weakness, or both, which these grounds would involve are utterly irreconcilable with the acknowledged character of Jesus; and none of the principles which are found to account for similar phenomena in the case of other historical personages, nor all of these principles together, are adequate or applicable in his case. But whether unexplained or explained, the fact remains, that *he* repeatedly expressed a sense of personal perfection and of extraordinary relation to God. He found and felt this as a fact of his inward nature; he uttered it as a distinct consciousness. A conviction is founded on evidence, and is reached by a process

of reasoning. The foundation may be unsound, the reasoning may be false, and the conviction may be an error; but a consciousness is an immediate and independent act, like seeing by the eye, or hearing by the ear. It is its own evidence, and none can be more satisfying, more sure. By the very constitution of the soul, *this* is the highest proof possible of the reality of that which it presents.

We can come only to one conclusion, that the words of Jesus were a faithful and genuine expression of his consciousness—a consciousness which creates an impassable distinction between him and all men. In that true voice of *his soul*, there is the strongest evidence of indubitable reality. He spoke what he felt, and he felt what he truly was. His nature was conscious of the profound mystery which belonged to it, and he simply uttered this consciousness, and no apparent inconsistency between what he claimed and what he seemed to be, troubled him for a moment.

A young man who had not long left the carpenter's shop, who at the moment he spoke was in a condition of poverty, and was associated only with those who were obscure and poor like himself, calmly declared his sense of perfect faultlessness and of extraordinary relation to God. Is it possible, that any candid mind can reflect on the plain facts of this history, and on the principles which

lie beneath them, on the *seeming* of this marvelous life, and on the *reality* which the seeming does but vail—ay, often unvail—and not be filled involuntarily with wonder and with awe?

PART III.

THE TOTALITY OF HIS MANIFESTATION BEFORE THE WORLD.

True Man.—Peculiar Susceptibility.—Sufferings and Provocations. —Unconquerable Patience.—Absolute spiritual Perfection.—Simplicity and Freshness.—Uniform Perfection.—Jesus a Manifestation, not an Effort.—A pure Original, and not an Imitation.—Alone in History.

CHRIST'S original and constant oneness with God prepares us to expect in him, an extraordinary elevation and purity of character. His mysterious consciousness, also, is the proof of moral greatness which never belonged to man. But in addition to these, there is a proof of his spiritual individuality, which comes home more directly to the consciences and hearts of men, and is fitted to move them more powerfully. It is found in his life, *as a whole*, in the *entire unfolding* of his character before the world from first to last.

His identification with universal humanity can not fail to be recognized at once. *He* belonged to no privileged class, and as an inhabitant of the world, he enjoyed no protection or advantage of any kind which was not common to all other hu-

man beings. Real moral excellence and holy force of character are admirable, whatever may have been the history of their production; but they are certainly less impressive when peculiar advantages have been enjoyed for their cultivation, and when peculiar measures have been adopted for their acquisition. If a man withdraw himself from the duties, trials, and snares of the world, retire to solitude, and devote his life to the pursuit of virtue, it is felt, however elevated his character may become, that the methods to which he has resorted are impossible to men in general, and indeed are at variance with the constitution of things which God has ordained. Even the example of an individual in the higher walks of society, or belonging to some privileged order, or in any other way placed in circumstances more than usually favorable to [illegible] and spiritual development, protected against hinderances and evils which beset other men, and possessed of encouragements and helps which they can not reach, can never act effectively and permanently on the world.

But Jesus Christ was *man* in the wide sense of that term, and was placed altogether in the ordinary circumstances which attend the lot of humanity on earth. *He* belonged to the masses and was brought up with them, unprivileged and undistinguished. His associations, all his outward relationships, his speech and his dress, were of the same

kind with theirs; so that there was every natural ground of sympathy between them and him. We read of his weariness, hunger, and thirst—of his tears and his groans—of his friendship with his disciples, and with John in particular—with Lazarus, Martha, and Mary; we read of him weeping at the grave of his friend; we read of his love to little children, taking them in his arms and blessing them. Whatever else he was, he was man, a true man, and his was a true and warm human heart. No reader of his life can doubt that he was a sharer to the full in the common circumstances, occupations, susceptibilities, trials, and wants of universal humanity.

Thus conditioned, Jesus had to encounter a difficulty of overwhelming force, altogether peculiar to himself and arising out of the constitution of his soul. In his own idea, whether true or false it matters not, he was born to a Godlike work. A mysterious purpose lay in his mind; it was to redeem and reclaim a world, to recover man to God and to immortal perfection. This was the passion of his heart, and the very nature of this passion, this purpose would necessarily render him more keenly susceptible and more dependent on grateful appreciation. But he was unappreciated and unsupported. Even his disciples, instead of fortifying him by their enlightened sympathy, vexed him with their low and earthly thoughts, and without

intending or even knowing it, they often obstructed instead of helping him. This was not all. He encountered designed resistance and unrelenting and cruel persecution. *He* never injured a single being, in his heart lay only intense love, but it was basely requited. His actions were decried, his motives suspected, his character maligned, his spirit, too unselfish and pure for that age, misconstrued and misunderstood. Because he was holy and denounced all evil, the workers of evil conspired against him, and moved an entire people in their wickedness and blindness to put him to death. The forms of justice were violated, the name of religion was prostituted, and he was surrendered to the unrestrained revenge and power of his enemies. But even then, he was absolutely unmoved in the deep love of his heart, and in all his gracious thoughts of man and for man's salvation. Never, amid cruel provocation and persecution, was his soul excited to anger. Once in the narrative of his life, the word anger is connected with his name—"he looked round upon them with *anger*, being *grieved* for the hardness of their hearts." But the passage itself sufficiently proves that it is not anger which is meant, but strong emotion, indignation perhaps, or amazement; for the same persons could not possibly be the objects of grief and of human anger at the same time. No; of one being in human form, but of one only, it can be said that he never spoke an an-

gry or unkind word, and never indulged for a moment an angry or unkind feeling. Ingratitude, injustice, hatred, pierced his soul; but his forgivingness, patience, meekness, and measureless love, were never disturbed. He bore in silence "the contradiction of sinners against himself;" "he was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross;" "when he was reviled he reviled not again, when he suffered he threatened not, but committed himself to Him who judgeth righteously." "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," was the prayer with which he died, and it breathes the spirit which pervaded his whole life.[1]

Was ever *man* like this? Was such a manifestation of a human soul ever even imagined? Certainly never, except in this instance, was such a manifestation described.

Greatness, in the sense which most commends itself to many minds, can not be claimed for Jesus. *His* name is not associated with the philosophy, the literature, or the science of the world. He occupied a position far above them. The good sense and the good taste of candid men will pronounce

[1] The Rev. T. H. Horne, in his "Introduction to the Study of the Scriptures," vol. i. p. 422, puts into English a magnificent eulogy of the character of Jesus, by J. J. Rousseau. The piece, in itself, is surpassingly beautiful and eloquent, but considering who its author was, it is beyond measure astonishing. The original passage will be found in the "Emile, ou de l'Education," liv. 4. Œuvres, tom. ii. p. 91, 92.—Frankfort, 1762.

unhesitatingly, that formal connection with any or all of them would have degraded, and not exalted him. It is not that *they* are not unspeakably important to the world, and it is not that he, or the religion which he founded, in its principles or its spirit, was hostile to them. But he was personally apart from them, and his greatness belonged to quite another sphere—one infinitely higher. We have shown that transcendent opulence, and power, and grandeur of soul were his; we have shown that he dealt as a master with things which the greatest of men thought it their highest office, even distantly, to approach. Unknown to philosophy, literature, and science, in him shone a light which they never kindled, and in him were the universal principles of all beauty and all truth.

The difficulty which we chiefly feel in dealing with the character of Christ, as it unfolded itself before men, arises from its absolute perfection. On this very account, it is the less fitted to arrest observation. A single excellence unusually developed, though in the neighborhood of great faults, is instantly and universally attractive. Perfect symmetry, on the other hand, does not startle, and is hidden from common and casual observers. But it is this which belongs emphatically to the Christ of the Gospels; and we distinguish in him at each moment that precise manifestation, which is most natural and most right. It is wonderful, that the

unpretending and brief annals of his life, by four different hands, have not failed in this respect, have not failed in any part of the delineation, or in a single touch or tint: the more wonderful it is, since the character was utterly unlike what the writers could have imagined, by the aid either of experience or of history.

In human beings, there never is an approach to sustained, proportioned, and universal goodness. The manifestation in one direction is so high as to be unnatural, while in another direction, it falls perhaps below the standard of our conceptions. This wondrous Person always *is,* and *acts up to the idea of* perfect humanity—never unnaturally elevated so as to be out of fellowship with men, and never below the highest human excellence, conceivable in the particular circumstances at the time. If men possess a virtue in an unusual degree, the probability is, that they will be found to exhibit a defect or fault in the opposite direction. The virtue itself shall pass into a fault, and shall occasion the injury or the neglect of other qualities equally essential. A man is remarkable for sagacity and decision, but he shall be coldly unsusceptible; or he is tender and ardent, but he shall be wanting in resolution and in judgment. He is remarkable for dignity of deportment, but he shall be reserved and proud; or he is communicative and accessible, but he shall be wanting in becoming self-respect.

The high development of the intellect is rarely combined with the due cultivation of the affections, and the cultivation of the affections is rarely combined with full development and force of intellect. Jesus Christ possessed the tenderest heart, overflowing with generous and warm feelings, but, at the same time, his wisdom was profound, and his decision of character was invincible. He was accessible to all without exception, and no circle of exclusiveness was at any time drawn around him in order to guard his presence; but he was always self-possessed, and self-sustained, and his dignity was commanding. Intellectually and morally, socially and personally, in relation to his kindred or his disciples, to the followers or the enemies of his ministry, he always rises up to the highest idea that can be formed of perfect man. And then, there is thrown over all his intercourse with men, the charm of freshness and genuine simplicity. Nothing is artificial, nothing assumed, nothing forced; but we behold the natural, honest, free development of a true soul. *He* is never trying to impress, never laboring to sustain a character. *He* is not aiming to seem, but he seems what he really is—no more, no less, no other. Nor does this Being come before us only on a few special occasions, carefully selected, in order to exhibit conspicuously the best aspects of his character. We behold him in every conceivable variety of positions, mingling

with all sorts of persons, and with all kinds of events; we follow the steps of his public life, and we watch his most unsuspecting and retired moments; we see him in the midst of thousands, or with his disciples, or with a single individual; we see him in the capital of his country, or in one of its remote villages, in the temple and the synagogue, or in the desert, or in the streets; we see him with the rich and with the poor, the prosperous and the afflicted, the good and the bad, with his private friends and with his enemies and murderers; and we behold him at last in circumstances the most overwhelming which it is possible to conceive, deserted, betrayed, falsely accused, unrighteously condemned, nailed to a cross! But wherever he is, and however placed, in the ordinary circumstances of his daily life, or at the last supper, or in Gethsemane, or in the judgment hall, or on Calvary, he is the same meek, pure, wise, god-like Being.

It must be most distinctly noted, that the character of Jesus was a manifestation not an effort. Men rise to spiritual excellence; but it is from the imperfections and errors of first efforts, it is after repeated failures, and as the result of a long and hard struggle with evil; and whatever triumph be achieved, the struggle, not unattended with frequent defeat, is prolonged to the last. This is the unqualified testimony of individual experience and of universal observation. But, in the case of Jesus

Christ, there were no indications of struggle or even of effort, and not a single failure or defeat. His soul was deeply moved by the darkness and the evil around him; but he was personally untainted with either. We behold the gradual unfolding of an inward power, which did not need to contend, but meekly and at once put aside whatever resistance was offered to it. By the words and the acts of his life, Jesus rebuked all that was ungodly, impure, and false among men; but invariably it was as one who himself was innocent of sin, and who was sent to renovate and bless the world. His life was a triumph from the first—the manifestation of a soul that stood invincible in its native spiritual force.

The character of Jesus, besides, was a pure original, not an imitation. The model existed not, and had never existed, from which it could have been copied. There is no record, in the writings of all nations and of all times, of a life for which absolute perfection is claimed from its beginning to its close. But the character of Christ drawn in the Gospels, though undesignedly on the part of the writers, is human perfection, in which we can discover no defect, and which we can imagine nothing beyond. Nor is it the concentration in a single life of attributes which, though they never all existed in combination before, had all existed separately, in different proportions, in other lives and other times

There are single elements of character and combinations of elements here, which are perfectly new appreciated and admired, having been once disclosed, but no trace of which had before appeared. The entire personality, as it rose up before the world, was a fresh living original—a stream from its native fountain, not the accumulation of many tributary waters.

The suspicion is very groundless that that manifestation which is delineated with great artlessness in the Gospels, was not real, but ideal—a creation of the writers' own minds, not a simple account of what they had actually witnessed. We need only refer to the intellectual and moral condition of Judea, with its known principles, habits, and tastes to the position and character of the evangelists, and then to the representation itself which they have executed, in order to show convincingly that such a suspicion is the most groundless which can be imagined. That country and these men could never have conceived or described such *ideal* spiritual excellence, as that which they have attached as a reality to the person of Jesus; least of all was it possible, that this idea could have been connected with the name and the office of the promised Messiah. This was not *their* idea at all, especially in this connection. In several most important respects, it was exactly the opposite of their idea; and by no possibility could it have originated merely

in their minds. Such a character as that of Jesus, *they* were not the persons to have ever imagined, and that it has been delineated by them, is the unassailable proof that it was actually seen.

Never passed before the imagination of man, and never but once alighted on this earth so heavenly a vision. Once, in all human history, we meet a being who never did an injury, and never resented one done to him, never uttered an untruth, never practiced a deception, and never lost an opportunity of doing good, generous in the midst of the selfish, upright in the midst of the dishonest, pure in the midst of the sensual, and wise far above the wisest of earth's sages and prophets, loving and gentle, yet immovably resolute, and whose illimitable meekness and patience never once forsook him in a vexatious, ungrateful, and cruel world.

If the New Testament had contained only the character of Jesus, as it unfolded itself in his intercourse with men, it had deserved a place above all human productions, it had been a mine of spiritual wealth, and a fountain of holy influence unknown to every other region, and to all the ages of time.

PART IV.

THE MOTIVE OF HIS LIFE.

Absence of Selfishness.—Presence of pure and lofty Motives.—His active Goodness.—Views of the Soul.—Love of Man as Man.—Gave his Life a Sacrifice.

THE recorded life of Christ proves that he neither sought to gain, nor, in point of fact did gain, power, wealth, or fame, for himself, or for any connected with him. He had frequent and fair opportunities of gratifying ambition, had his nature been tainted with that passion. Occasions were even thrust upon him, and the amplest means were ever ready to his hand. The Jews expected in their Messiah a king, and were burning with impatience for his advent. Jesus needed only to have announced himself, and the country would have hailed him with enthusiasm, and would have enthroned and crowned him. As a matter of fact, such was the state of the public mind, that on more than one occasion, the people were about to take him by force to make him a king, but he quietly withdrew till

the excitement had passed away. Throughout his public life, though announcing the sublimest truths, and performing the noblest works, he never stepped, or sought to step, out of the humble sphere in which he had been brought up. It has been shown that he was at first, and he continued to the last, a poor man. He does not seem to have ever possessed for himself to the value of the smallest coin, and, when he died, he had no means of providing for his mother, and could only commend her to the care of one of his disciples.

The entire absence of selfishness, in any form, from the character of Christ, can not be questioned, and not less undoubted was the active presence of pure and lofty motives. His life was not only negatively good, it was filled up with positive and matchless excellence, and was spent directly and wholly in blessing the world. A large portion of it was occupied with teaching, and both in its design and its native tendency, Christ's teaching was only restorative and healing, and itself at once reveals the motive in which it originated—love of man, profound, unselfish love. This reigning spirit was yet more apparent, though not more really present, in another region of Christ's life. He lived not merely to announce spiritual truth, but to relieve and remove physical suffering. The supernatural character of this portion of his work among men, we do not urge; but apart from this,

it is quite certain that much of his life was occupied in healing the sick, and comforting the sorrowing and the poor. The substance of the record on this head, is condensed in a few beautiful sentences by Matthew, 4th chapter, 23d and 24th verses. "And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the Gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease among the people. And his fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those that were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had palsy, and he healed them." Make what deductions we will, it is perfectly certain, if any thing of history remain in the Gospels, that multitudes in that age experienced the effect of Christ's merciful interposition. "He went about doing good." He wiped away many a tear; he made many human hearts glad; and many others connected with them felt the benignant and genial influence of his earthly ministry. He relieved and removed a great amount of physical suffering; he created and planted in the world a great amount of physical happiness. He devoted himself to the work of blessing man; and in both regions of his life, in his acts and in his words, in the healing spiritual truths which he imparted, and in the unnumbered material kindnesses which he bestowed,

we discover one reigning motive—love of man, deep, enduring, redeeming love.

We are entitled to assert that compassion for humanity held the place of a master-force in the soul of Jesus Christ. The man is worse than blind who does not perceive the charm of a subduing tenderness streaming fresh from his heart, and shed over his whole public life. It is related that, once as he looked upon the multitudes that had assembled to listen to his teaching, "he had compassion on them, because they were as sheep that had no shepherd."[1] We hold that this short sentence descends to the deepest depth of his being, and lays open the chief spring of all his movements, *he had compassion on the multitudes.* Spiritual truth was precious to him; he felt also the burden of a great mission, and he was tenderly alive to all the rights and claims of God. But he pitied and loved the multitude; their spiritual condition, their destinies, their necessities, and their sorrows oppressed his heart. In addition to all the force of fidelity to God, to himself, and to truth of which he was conscious, there were impulses of love and pity that gushed up ever warm and fresh in his bosom, and imparted a subduing tone to all his ministrations. Jesus saw an inexpressible worth in human nature. It is fallen and ruined, but it is a precious ruin. The wonderful powers yet left to the soul, and the

[1] Matthew, xv. 32.

amazing destiny before it, ineffably bright or unutterably dark, were present to *his* mind, and were the source of that yearning affection which ruled his life. He loved man *as man*. The attachment of the members of the same family, or the natives of the same country, of companions in suffering, and of disciples of the same faith, to each other, is easily understood. But when the circle is widened, the attachment is proportionally impaired, and love to man, *simply as man*, is scarcely intelligible. To Christ this was not only an intelligible, but a profound reality. Neither natural relationship, nor condition, nor even character, nor country, nor creed, determined the movement of his heart. It was man he loved, the nature, the race, for its own sake, and because of its solemn relations to eternity, and to God. Himself man, he felt an inexpressible nearness to humanity, and his whole life, and still more his death, were an expression of his unmeasurable love. The higher purposes of the cross are not now before us; but it must not be overlooked that, at last, Jesus could have saved his life if he would have sacrificed his mission. But that mission was dearer to him than life; man was dearer to him, man's redemption and restoration to God were dearer to him than life. He could not, would not, abandon these; but his life he could and did surrender, a true and holy sacrifice on the cross!

A single act of pure generosity fails not to touch the human heart; all men bow down instinctively before it. There are some human names which the world can never forget, the names of those who, in different departments, perhaps for a course of years, exhibited wonderful devotion to the good of others. What then shall be said of Him, whose *entire life* was spent in benefiting, not a single class, but all classes of men, and in originating, not one form, but endless forms of good, from the lowest up to that which relates to the immortal nature and to its highest destinies? Christianity, and Christianity alone, is the revelation of a pure and perfect love the unvailing of the solitary living model of this grace which humanity has furnished. A profound secret of God, the unfathomable mercy of his nature was to be divulged to the world. It was pronounced in words, in words of deep significance; but it was also expressed by a sign; and there stood before men an impersonation of perfect love, a life which disclosed and embodied intense, inextinguishable, self-sacrificing love.

PART V.

HIS FAITH IN GOD, TRUTH, AND THE REDEMPTION OF MAN.

His Foreknowledge of his Death.—Solitariness.—Never himself disappointed.—Truth, a Provision for Wants, Cure for Evils of World.—Attributes of God.—Expressions and Proofs of Christ's state of Mind.—Institution of the Supper.—Interpretation of Facts.

It is one of the marvelous facts in Christ's history that he distinctly foreboded the calamities which were to befall him. Evil did not come upon him unawares; its pressure and its bitterness were aggravated by anticipation. No explanation is here offered of this fact, and nothing will be built upon it in the way of argument, but it stands with great distinctness in the narrative. "From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples how that he must go unto Jerusalem and suffer many things of the elders, and chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day."[1] In harmony with this he forewarned his disciples:

[1] Matthew, xvi. 21.

"Ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake." [1] "They shall put you out of the synagogues; yea, the time cometh that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service." [2] In the garden of Gethsemane, he said to those who were with him, "Behold, the hour cometh, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going: behold he is at hand that doth betray me." [3] When Judas with the band of soldiers drew near, "Jesus knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth and said unto them, Whom seek ye? They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am he." [4] If Christ was gifted, whether naturally or supernaturally, with any thing of the insight into the future which these passages suppose, at least no one will doubt that its effect must have been to render the burden of calamity many times more crushing. But, leaving this debated ground, we must repeat the fact already referred to for a different purpose—that Christ was literally alone in his sufferings, unsupported by a single human mind. Courage and faith are not unusual, when the principles that call them forth have been adopted by others, and have received this decisive proof of their adaptation and their truth. That which is true, indeed, is not more true by being understood and admitted, and what a man

[1] Matthew, x. 22.
[2] John, xvi. 2.
[3] Matthew, xxvi, 45, 46.
[4] John, xviii. 4, 5.

believes is not really more worthy of his belief than before, when it is accepted by others as well as himself. But mind leans on mind, nevertheless, and the enlightened convictions of one impart increased stability and strength to the enlightened convictions of another. What we could not effect or endure alone, we can effect and endure when supported by other kindred souls. Jesus knew no such support as this. He was followed indeed by multitudes, but it was not because they understood and embraced his principles; and hence when these principles were more fully disclosed, "many went back and walked no more with him."[1] Even his own relatives had no intelligent faith in him, and his chosen disciples gave to him their affections rather than their judgments. They devotedly loved his personal character, they believed in his greatness, but they did not comprehend it; the new principles struggled in their minds with the old faith, but they never succeeded, while he lived, in completely displacing it. Hence, when he died, the disciples at the first spoke as if their hopes were overthrown forever. The plain fact is, that Jesus at the last disappointed his disciples, disappointed his own relations, disappointed the masses of the people, disappointed every one except himself. *He* was never disappointed, from the first to the last moment of his course. Without a single complete example of

[1] John, vi. 66.

success while he lived, amid constant discouragement and apparent discomfiture, he calmly believed in the omnipotence of spiritual truth and in the divinity of his own mission.

Speedy triumph he did not and could not anticipate. With that profound and calm wisdom which we have already seen distinguished him, he could not fail to know, when he thought of the insidious and mysterious working of sin, and its almost indestructible *force*, that it must be long before it could be forever extirpated. When he saw human nature fallen from God, and darkened and diseased, he could not fail to know that its restoration, purification, education for immortality, and complete cure, must be a slow and protracted process. When he looked upon the vast empire of evil, the growth of thousands of years, its foundations strong and deep, and its ramifications innumerable, he could not fail to know that its entire and final overthrow must be the work of ages. Tremendous conflicts *must* precede such a triumph as he anticipated; centuries of darkness and struggle *must* intervene. But he knew, at the same time, and was calmly assured of the perfect adaptation of spiritual truth to the spiritual condition of the world; and he saw in that truth, if the only, yet the sure provision for all the wants of men, if the only, yet the infallible, remedy for all the evils that preyed upon them.

"The spiritual nature within man, the spiritual

world around and over him, the Uncreated Father of all, pardon of sin, ere long to receive all the elucidation and all the evidence of the cross, the regeneration of the soul and its reconciliation to God." —These were the living, holy truths which Jesus announced; and in these, in their adaptation, their mighty force, and their certain triumph, his confidence was unmovable. But higher even than this he was able to ascend. From spiritual truth he rose to its author and fountain, God. He believed that his mission was of God, the purpose which he was unfolding and executing was God's, and the infinite resources of God were pledged to its realization. He looked to that universal providence which includes mind as well as matter, and to all its mighty combinations and agencies; he looked to the ever-flowing and inexhaustible fountain of spiritual influences, and to him whose knowledge, wisdom, and power are illimitable, and his confidence was untroubled and serene. In his whole life, no indication of doubt, even for a moment, can be discovered. Not a word of hesitation ever escaped his lips. When his last hour was approaching, his voice to his disciples was the voice of calm assurance. "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."[1] "Ye now have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man

[1] John, xvi. 33.

taketh from you."[1] "The world seeth me no more: but ye see me; because I live, ye shall live also. In that day ye shall know that I am in the Father, and you in me, and I in you."[2] "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid."[3] With respect to the infallible success of his own mission, this was his language, "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."[4] "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations."[5] At the Last Supper, when Judas Iscariot had gone out to confer with the Pharisees and Scribes, Jesus said, "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God be glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself, and will straightway glorify him."[6] When he stood before the council which condemned him, and when the high priest adjured him to tell if he *were* the Christ, he answered, "Hereafter ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven."[7] At that awful moment his faith was unconquered, unconquerable.

This, then, is the state of the case, as a mere matter of history:—A young man destitute of re-

[1] John, xvi. 22. [2] Ib. xiv. 19, 20. [3] Ib. xiv. 27.
[4] Ib. xii. 32. [5] Matt. xxiv. 14. [6] John, xiii. 31, 32.
[7] Mark, xiv. 62.

sources, of patronage, and of influence, commits himself to an enterprise which, so long as he lives, is not appreciated or even understood. He is persecuted and scorned, deserted by his friends, betrayed by one of his disciples, falsely accused and condemned to a disgraceful and torturing death. But, alone, with death before him, and without one earthly support, he calmly believes that the enterprise shall triumph, and that *he* shall reign in the minds and hearts of men!

Can *this* have been only human? Was there ever a manifestation of *mere humanity* like to this. Can any thing short of the union of divinity with this humanity account for the acts and states of Christ's mind?

This is not all; the narrative offers some additional facts. At the Last Supper Jesus told his disciples, as they sat around him, that the time of his death was near at hand. Were his confidence and courage shaken by the prospect? Did no fear disturb him—fear of the effect which his death might produce on the opinion of the world? Did no feeling of uneasiness rise within him as if after all he might fail? At all events, was he not anxious that the ignominious termination of his course might be concealed after he was gone? No, he was not; but, with perfect composure, he made provision that not only his death itself, but all its agony and its shame should never be forgotten

while the world lasted. "He took bread and gave it to his disciples, saying, this is my body broken for you; this do in remembrance of me. In like manner he took the cup, saying, this is my blood shed for you; this do in remembrance of me."[1]

Was ever serenity like this? Can any thing more touching, more sublime than this be conceived? Was it ever heard of, before or since, that a person, in the position of a malefactor, took pains to preserve the memory of his disgraceful death? Jesus Christ, about to be crucified as a felon and a slave, commanded and provided that the fact should be remembered to the end of time—did so in the full confidence that he should at last triumph. And the fact *has been* remembered. This is the mystery —if he be not all that he claimed to be—this is truly more miraculous than any thing ever so called, more inexplicable on all natural principles. The fact has been remembered for eighteen hundred years; it is remembered at this day; and it has been and is remembered, not as a form, a time-honored custom, but minds have been won to Christ —human hearts have been and are inviolably attached to him.

Christ's assurance of triumph is a historical fact; his actual triumph for nearly two thousand years is no less historically certain: the two combined

[1] Matthew, xxvi; Mark, xiv; Luke, xxii.

lead to one conclusion only. It is this—*he* was, as he claimed to be, divine: his religion is divine, the only religion which contains the indubitable proof, and presents to the world a real incarnation of divinity—God *in* man.

PART VI.

THE ARGUMENT FROM HIS CHARACTER TO HIS DIVINITY.

Moral Aspects and outward Facts of Christ's History.—A Character such as his not once realized.—Interests of Truth and Virtue.—Moral Condition of Mankind charged on God.—Humanity in Christ peculiarly conditioned.—Idea of Incarnation universal.—A primitive Revelation.—A universal want.—Provision for this Want made once for all.—Higher Nature in Christ, not higher Office merely.—Absolute Divinity.—This secured Aids and Influences incommunicable to others.

THE spiritual individuality of Christ, we have found, is striking as it is manifest. Whether we look to his oneness with God, to the marvelous forms of his consciousness, to the totality of his manifestation, to the motive of his life, or to his unconquerable faith, his character, take it all in all, must be confessed to stand alone in the history of the world. But this character, in its unapproachable grandeur, must be viewed in connection with the outward circumstances of the being in whom it was realized—in connection with a life not only unprivileged, but offering numerous positive hinderances to the origination, the growth, and, most

of all, the perfection of spiritual excellence. In a Jew of Nazareth—a young man—an uneducated mechanic—moral perfection was realized. Can this phenomenon be accounted for? There is here, without doubt, a manifestation of humanity; but the question is, was this a manifestation of mere humanity, *and no more?* Can this be interpreted on the common principles, which in other cases explain the facts of history, observation, and experience? It is not maintained, in any quarter worthy of regard, that ordinary principles of interpretation are sufficient here. But, if not, what are the extraordinary principles that are sufficient in this singular case?

This question is met by the suggestion that Jesus needed and received for the mission with which he was charged, extraordinary protection from God—protection for his intellect, his conscience, and his heart; and not only protection, but extraordinary divine influence, in the illumination, invigoration, guidance, and entire culture of his spiritual nature. It is suggested that, by the holy power and under the sheltering care of God, his character was preserved faultless, and rose to the highest perfection of which humanity is capable. Certainly, special powers are demanded for special functions, and it is fitting that unusual honors should attend unusual responsibilities. It is obvious, also, that God has a right to withhold or bestow his own gifts, and to

bestow them on whom and in what measure he pleaseth. But the question arises, if Jesus was no more than man, why have there not been other men like him? why has there not been one man like to him in the whole course of time? The question is unanswerable, we humbly maintain. If by the spiritual protection and influence of God, Jesus in his peculiar circumstances—with his youth, his want of education, his poverty, and all his hinderances and exposures—reached moral perfection, it is unaccountable that, in far happier combinations of circumstances, such an attainment has never been approached. What God did for one man, God certainly could have done for other men. It is unaccountable that it has *never* been done, and that not a single individual known to history has risen to the glory of this youthful, untaught, unprivileged Galilean mechanic. The question here, it must be remembered, does not respect *merely* adaptation to an extraordinrry sphere; it does not respect *merely* official qualifications and endowments; it relates to personal excellence, to moral education and culture, to inward goodness; and it is, therefore, vitally connected with the great cause of virtue and truth in the world. If Jesus was man only, and if, therefore, the invigorating and quickening influences of God bestowed on him, *could* have been bestowed on others, it is impossible without deep injury to the divine character, with-

out impeaching either the benignity, or the purity of God, to account for their being withheld in other cases. All is intelligible and consistent if Jesus was essentially separate from men, separate in the very constitution of his person—a being raised up *once in all time* for a crisis which never could again arise, and for a work never to be repeated. But if not, if he was man only, we ask in the name of that holiness which is the life of the intelligent universe, and in the name of God with whom the interests of holiness are paramount, how it has come to pass, that of all men *he alone* has risen to spiritual perfection? What God did for piety and virtue on the earth at one time and in one case, God certainly could have done at other times and in other cases. If Jesus was man only, God could have raised up, in successive ages, many such living examples of sanctified humanity *as he was*, to correct, instruct, and quicken the world. But he did not; and the guilt of the moral condition of mankind is thus charged at once upon God; and the real cause of the continuance of moral evil, and of the limited success of holiness and truth in the earth is thus declared to be *in God*—that cause is the withholding of his merciful influences.

If such be the inevitable conclusion to which these premises lead, we have no alternative except to abandon them as false and impious. Jesus Christ can not have been merely man. No mere man,

especially under the outward conditions that environed him—not the most venerable and gifted sage, in circumstances incomparably more favorable than his—ever rose to his moral stature; and unless all analogy and the unbroken testimony of a history are to be set aside, we *must* believe that Jesus was not merely man. It is morally impossible that the spiritual perfection of his character can have been owing to divine influences, which *could* have been bestowed as well on others as on him. If they *could* have been bestowed, we can not doubt, looking to the benignant and holy character of God, that they *must* have been bestowed. Since they were not bestowed on others, but *only* on him, there must have been something in him some real and great difference to account for the fact, something which rendered *that* possible to him which was not possible to any other. Between him and all men there must have been a separation—though there was also as certainly a community—of nature; a separation not incidental and relative only, but constitutional and organic. Humanity in him must have existed under conditions, essentially distinct from those which belong to the universal humanity of the world. Incarnation, but incarnation alone, helps us to the solution of the overwhelming difficulties of this case. It is perceived at once that this involved access to God, and reception from him—involved illumination, protection, guidance,

and power absolutely and necessarily *incommunicable* to all others. Man, Jesus certainly was, but not man merely, but God in man.

We can not hope to discover, in the religions of mankind, the method of solving the deepest problem of Christianity, but it is quite possible that they may illustrate, perhaps confirm, the only satisfactory solution which has yet been suggested. In these religions, almost without exception, the idea of incarnation will be found under one form or another. It is related that Paul and Barnabas in the city of Lystra were about to receive divine honors; Barnabas was to be worshiped as an incarnation of Jupiter, and Paul as an incarnation of Mercury. The people of Lycaonia cried, "The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men."[1] The noticeable fact is, that this was not a new and strange thought to them, but one apparently familiar, and generally received, and which, therefore, at once occurred to them as affording an easy interpretation of what they had seen and heard in connection with the two foreigners. The numberless metamorphoses of the gods of ancient Greece and Rome, and in the eastern world the incarnations of Brahm, the avatars of Vishnu, and the human form of Kreeshna, and its reappearance in successive ages, are significant and demonstrative on this subject. Among almost all nations, and from the

[1] Acts, xiv. 1.

earliest period of which any authentic record has been preserved, down to our own times, the idea of God incarnating himself is found. But mankind do not *universally*, and for *successive ages* adopt that which is *wholly* false. On the most philosophical grounds it may be argued, that the continued and wide acceptance of the notion of incarnation in the world is decisive proof that it must have *some* basis of truth. The idea, indeed, if admitted by men at all, was manifestly for conscience and reason, in their most reverent and subdued exercise, and not for imagination. It was too awfully sacred for imagination, even in its most chastened movements, to have approached. But imagination unchastened, irreverent, impure, coarse, and wild, dared to violate this sanctity. The result we behold in the contradictions, absurdities, blasphemies, and offenses against all faith and all religious feeling and taste, of which the world is full. But in spite of the humiliating and revolting facts of this kind which abound, it may be argued incontrovertibly, that the idea itself of incarnation must, from its universality, have *some* basis of truth. One of two things, or both, may be legitimately presumed. Either this idea is the traditionary vestige of some primitive revelation, or there must be some grand necessity of universal human nature which, it is felt, can be met only by the doctrine of incarnation in one form or other. The deep sense of such a

necessity, all nations and all times have proclaimed. And does not Christianity reveal the only actual provision which has been made to meet this universal want? It was a promise in the beginning, it was a hope and a faith in successive ages, and in *the fullness of the times* the promise was fulfilled, the faith and the hope were realized. Once for all, a response worthy of God was given to the cry of humanity; once for all, to meet a grand necessity, to achieve what no otherwise could have been achieved, for the redemption of man, God incarnated himself. The union of divinity with humanity is the only principle which harmonizes the outward facts and the moral aspects of the life of Jesus Christ. Disgusted by the absurdities, and shocked by the impurities and impieties of mythological incarnations, conscience and reason find rest in *one incarnation for all time.*

In the New Testament this awful doctrine stands apart from all the additions which the fancy, or folly, or corrupt taste of men have in other cases introduced. Here is not a baseless invention, but a thing for which numerous and extraordinary proofs can be advanced. This also, instead of creating perplexity, which had not otherwise existed, relieves and removes perplexity, the existence of which is indubitable, and the removal of which by other means is impossible. What is still more, this is not gratuitous mystery, the only purpose of which

is to embellish or hallow a system. It is not a grand and useless dogma, but a necessity, in order to the solution of facts profoundly interesting, and all-important—a necessity, to which both the course of history, and the laws and experiences of the human mind compel us to bow.

The mystery of incarnation, notwithstanding the considerations which have been advanced, remains as dark as ever. The union of divinity with humanity in the person of Jesus Christ, we can not explain, can not comprehend; but that such union existed, we *must* believe, because it rests on evidence which can not be set aside; and some, at least, of the consequences that follow from the mysterious fact are perfectly intelligible to us. It is clear, for example, as we have sought to prove, that incarnation is sufficient to create, and alone *can* create, that amount of difference between Jesus Christ and all men, which the facts of his history, otherwise irreconcilable, demand for their solution. Humanity in him, existing under conditions which are found nowhere else, we do not wonder at moral peculiarities which would otherwise be confounding. His spiritual perfection, inexplicable on every other principle, on this principle is intelligible and consistent.

In the personal character of Christ, then, we have the evidence not only of a higher *office*, but of a higher *nature*, than ever belonged to man; the

evidence of an essential, constitutional separation from all men.

In him who was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners; in Jesus, the son of Mary, the words of the ancient oracle received their beautiful fulfillment:—"Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."[1]

[1] Isaiah, ix. 6.

CONCLUSION.

Incarnation of Jesus throws light on all the wonders of his history.—Supernatural Birth.—Resurrection and Ascension.—His Miracles.—Spiritual meaning.—Typical character.—Sophistry of Strauss.—Extraordinary tokens of Divinity demanded.—The Voice of God.—World summoned to listen and believe.

THE argument which it was proposed to construct, is completed. We have found, first, that the public ministry of Christ, and second, that his spiritual character is incapable of being reconciled, on any natural and known principles, with the outer conditions of his life. In the one case and in the other, and much more when the two are taken together, there is no escape from the conclusion, that the secret of harmony here is altogether preternatural, and is nothing less than the union of Divinity with humanity, in his sacred person. The argument, by means of which this conclusion is reached, we have sought to show is based on an ample, a relevant, and an impartial induction of facts.

The doctrine of Incarnation is simply true. It is the darkness, but it is also the glory of the spirit-

ual history of mankind. It is the central fact in the scheme of moral providence, its unity, harmony, and fountain of power. It is the realization of the highest purposes of God, the discovery of the depth of his wisdom, love, and might. "Great is the mystery of godliness, God manifest in flesh."[1] "*The Word* was made flesh and dwelt among us; and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."[2] "*The Life* was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested unto us."[3]

Having reached this conclusion a flood of light is reflected back on the Christian records; and many of their announcements, before scarcely credible, become luminous and consistent. These records are separated at once and forever from all mythologies, whether of Egypt, India, Greece, or Rome. *Their* foundation is not fable, but fact—a fact, profoundly mysterious, indeed, but also incomparably glorious. The combination of mystery and glory at the very basis, and on the very threshold of the Gospels, not only prepares the mind for all the peculiarities of their structure, but demands, and even necessitates, discoveries in harmony with this primal characteristic.

If Jesus be the Incarnation of Divinity, it is no

[1] Tim. iii. 16. [2] John, i. 14. [3] 1 John, i. 2.

longer hard to believe that both his entrance into the world and his departure from it were supernatural. So far from being anomalous, this is altogether necessary and natural. Any thing else would not have been in keeping with the history. His virgin-mother is a beautiful and simple reality. It would have been incongruous, even offensive, had *he* not been thus physically separated from *all* of human kind. His resurrection also, and his ascension to heaven, are transparencies as pure as his miraculous birth. It was most meet that, having lain in the grave and "tasted death for every man," he should rise again and pass into the skies. Thus has he become a glorious prophecy and type of the destiny of all good, which, though struggling hard with evil, and often seemingly overborne, shall ultimately exhibit and assert its indestructible vitality—a prophecy and type of the destiny of all the good, who, though despised, persecuted, and slain, shall rise again unhurt, emancipated and glorified, to immortal life.

Again, such an entrance into the world, and such a departure from it, could comport only with a life-course full of testimonies and tokens of Divinity. The miracles of Jesus are in strict harmony with the commencement and the close of his career, and, like them, have their ground in the unexampled constitution of his personality. They are indeed essential to that mysterious existence of his, in

which both human and Divine perfections had their place. Without them, the beautiful proportions of a unique biography, the undesigned but very manifest symmetry of a Divine life on earth, would be destroyed. Nor must the *character* of the miracles of Jesus be overlooked. With him they were chiefly a method of teaching. Every one of them contained a wide and deep spiritual meaning; and the whole together were an exposition, in a most intelligible and impressive form, of the nature and design of his mission. They were not mere signs of power, but lessons of wisdom and acts of mercy; they were not simply attestations of a Divine Presence, but subduing expressions and expositions of the Divine character. The bountiful and loving God, in the form of man, came to bless the world; the incarnate one—then how truly god-like—is seen giving bread to the poor, sight to the blind, health to the diseased, life to the dead! And how significant, how eloquent, were these material types of his higher spiritual powers and gifts. *He* was the bread of life to the world, he came to do for the soul what he thus did for the body; came to supply spiritual wants as he had supplied natural wants, to provide a remedy for spiritual evils as he had cured physical evils; came to abolish death, to put away sin, and to reveal and bestow eternal life! Literally and spiritually alike, he could apply to himself the words of the ancient

oracle—"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath annointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison doors to them that are bound."[1]

Strauss, in one of his minor pieces, argues against the value of miracles in some such manner as this (without quoting the express words, we give the spirit of his argument):—"Jesus is said on one occasion to have fed five thousand persons miraculously; but God, every day, supplies the wants of unnumbered myriads. Jesus is said to have given sight to the blind and even life to the dead; but sensation and vitality are the daily gifts of God to the world in cases past all reckoning. Which is the greater wonder? and what wisdom can there be in placing a lesser miracle before those who will not be moved by the greater miracle?" We admit the principle and maintain it against him. His argument is a palpable, we are tempted to say a paltry and wicked, because *known*, sophism. The question is not, whether the laws of nature and their constant operation be or be not more truly wonderful than any special departure from them; the question is not whether there be or be not really more of God, in the one than in the other. But the question is this, whether, as a matter of simple

[1] Isaiah, lxi. 1.

fact, men are or are not more impressed by the ordinary operation of natural laws, than by a sudden deviation from it. To this question, all experience, all observation, and all history return a decisive reply. Men who *never* recognize God in his universal and constant agency within and around them, are immediately arrested and forced to admit the thought that there is a God, even by a seeming, and still more by a real and startling, deviation from the course of nature.

We return to the position, that, since Jesus was verily an Incarnation of the Godhead, miraculous works in his life were only becoming and natural. This does not in the least exclude the application of the severest criticism, to the historical accounts of the Christian miracles. But the unbroken course of nature, in the presence of a fact so stupendous as Incarnation, had been of all things unnatuarl and incredible. The Divinity within Jesus must have flashed forth through many outlets; and, on the other hand, the world could not but thrill responsively, when it felt the very touch of God. Necessarily, there must have been at such a time extraordinary appearances and movements. It was only reasonable, indeed inevitable, that an age in which the profoundest mystery of all time was unvailed, and in which Divine religion was to reach its full development, should be distinguished by unwonted signs from heaven. It was only reasonable, indeed

inevitable, that such an age should be pre-eminently creative, as of new powers, so of novel and astonishing facts; and that there should be an almighty influence among men, not invisible and mental only, but palpable, and embodied in material forms. Still further, is it not plain that a mystery so inscrutable as Incarnation, and a religion based on this mystery, and claiming to be alone Divine, a religion which professed to rise to the grandest truths of God, and to pierce to the deepest secrets of the human bosom—both needed the fullest confirmation, and merited the glory of supernatural signs? The world, so often deceived by counterfeits of Divinity, was entitled to have the amplest assurance given to it, that at last, in very deed, God had descended upon it. The world in the midst of its corruptions, its false religions, and its darkness, needed extraordinary means for awakening and sustaining its attention, for arousing its slumbering intellect, and summoning its torpid conscience to life and power. At such a crisis, it was meet, it was indispensable, that the hand of God should be made bare, and that the voice of God should be uttered, as it had never been before.

In nature, its scenery, processes, productions, and very silence, God speaks to his rational offspring, and speaks intelligibly and impressively. In spiritual providence, its operations, ordinary and extraordinary, its history and its laws, God speaks. In

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man, the products of his intellect, his imagination and his taste, in the achievements of science and art, in the creations of human genius, and in all the utterances of human wisdom and piety, God speaks!

But once, only once, in all time, the Godhead tabernacled in flesh, and from within this marvelous vail gave forth its holy and grand announcements. The first, the lowest, but yet also the last and highest, duty of the world, is to *listen and believe.* The command to all ages and to all men is, *listen and believe.* That command was given of old in Palestine, from the opened sky, beneath which Jesus of Nazareth stood:—"*This is my beloved Son, hear ye him.*"

THE END.

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